Deweyan Democracy and Pluralism: A Reunion

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Abstract: What Talisse refers to as his "pluralist objection" states that Deweyan democracy, or John Dewey's theory of democracy as contemporary Dewey scholars understand it, resembles a thick account, that is, a theory establishing a set of prior restraints on the values that can count as legitimate within a democratic community, and thus is incompatible with pluralism, at least insofar as contemporary political theorists define that term. In this paper, I argue that by undermining the pluralist objection, a reunion of Deweyan democracy and pluralism—two ideas that have been torn asunder by Talisse's misreading of Dewey and Deweyans—becomes possible.

> *So let us not be naïve: Deweyan democracy is antipluralist in that it places decisive constraints upon the kinds of voices we need to include. . . . Consider that the Deweyan-democratic commitment to inquiry excludes not only those who refuse to inquire, but also those who hold views that are incompatible with the fallibilism and experimentalism at the heart of inquiry.*—Robert Talisse[1]

I. Introduction

What Talisse refers to as his "pluralist objection" states that Deweyan democracy, or John Dewey's theory of democracy as contemporary Dewey scholars understand it, resembles a thick account, that is, a theory establishing a set of prior restraints on the values that can count as legitimate within a democratic community, and thus is incompatible with pluralism, at least insofar as contemporary political theorists define that term. In this paper, I argue that by undermining the pluralist objection, a reunion of Deweyan democracy and pluralism—two ideas that have been torn asunder by Talisse's misreading of Dewey and Deweyans—becomes possible.

The pluralist objection is susceptible to a combination of one or more of the following three charges. First, in reading Deweyan democracy through the filter

of Berlinian value pluralism, his interpretation neglects to consider Dewey's own theory of valuation. Analogously, we could imagine a contemporary interpreter of Plato's *Symposium* employing the filtering strategy by entirely overlooking the ancient Greek view of homoeroticism and instead understanding the text in terms of the post-Freudian category of homosexuality.[2] Second, and similar to the previous charge, the pluralist objection challenges the pluralist credentials of Deweyan democracy according to the standard offered by John Rawls, what he calls 'reasonable pluralism,' not in terms of Dewey's own principle of growth. In reaction to these charges, Talisse could justifiably claim that the argument for treating Dewey on his own terms, or reading his ideas without first filtering them through more recent theoretical frameworks, is groundless. Contemporary Deweyans must inevitably reconcile their own Dewey-inspired democratic theories with the accounts of pluralism currently dominant in the democracy literature, including those advanced by Berlin and Rawls. Unfortunately for Talisse's argument, there is no parallel avenue for escaping the third charge. By framing the distinction between substantive and proceduralist democratic theory as a strict and exclusive dichotomy, he mistakes Deweyan democracy for a purely substantive or thick theory. Instead, Dewey's theory of democracy proves to be highly proceduralist and perfectly compatible with a plurality of reasonable political views—or so I argue.

The next section of the paper is devoted to a presentation of Talisse's pluralist objection. The third section sets forth the three charges against the pluralist objection. In the fourth section, I give an account of the pragmatist pluralist procedure as it manifests in Dewey's writings and in the works of a contemporary Deweyan, William Caspary, and then demonstrate how the procedure operates in a concrete case study. Deweyan democratic communities are compared with gay or 'queer' communities to demonstrate that while both kinds of communities reveal dynamic patterns of inclusion and exclusion, queer communities are distinctive in that they employ a highly proceduralist criterion of inclusion. In the concluding section, the implications of deploying such analogies are considered.

II. Talisse's Pluralist Objection

Robert Talisse objects that Deweyan democrats cannot consistently hold that (i) "democracy is a way of life"[3] and (ii) democracy as a way of life is compatible with pluralism. Thus he recommends, "Deweyans . . . [should] drop the vocabulary of pluralism."[4] In "Can Democracy be a Way of Life?" he characterizes "Deweyan democracy" as thick or substantive, "a style of . . . democratic theory which emphasizes citizen participation in the shared cooperative undertaking of self-government at all levels of social association."[5] On this view, to embrace Deweyan democracy is to commit oneself to a set of substantive values related to citizen engagement and inquiry, values that severely restrain the scope of acceptable conceptions of the

good (or life plans) that may be held by citizens. If inquiry-related values, such as fallibilism and experimentalism, are incompatible with the worldview of any person or group, then that incompatibility becomes a legitimate basis for excluding them from enjoying the public benefits of living in a Deweyan democracy. The reason that Deweyan democrats embrace a thick conception of democracy, Talisse claims, is that they wish to understand democratic life as Dewey did, that is, as "a mode of social organization in which citizens collectively inquire into shared problems."[6] So, when Deweyans employ the slogan "democracy is a way of life," what they are really saying (in a convenient short-hand) is that they endorse an exclusively thick or substantive theory of democracy.

As both a descriptive and normative concept, pluralism plays a pivotal role, Talisse notes, in the contemporary literature on democratic theory. If a democratic theorist is to find a warm reception for her theory, she must grapple with the reality that "reasonable, sincere people profoundly disagree about . . . ultimate ends" but go further than simply propound the truism "that toleration is necessary for democracy."[7] Insofar as those who hold rival worldviews disagree over final ends or values, pluralism is an obstinate feature of modern political life and, in some cases, an insurmountable obstacle to democratic will-formation. "Pluralism," in Talisse's words, "is the thesis that at least some, and perhaps many, of these disagreements are inevitable, irresolvable, non-contingent, and, in a word, permanent."[8]

According to Talisse, pluralism comes in two varieties: (i) value (or ontological) pluralism and (ii) epistemic pluralism.[9] Value pluralists, such as Isaiah Berlin and John Gray, argue that values resemble "objective moral facts" or "moral goods" that cannot be simultaneously realized in a single set, for some will inevitably prove incompatible, incompossible or incommensurable with each other.[10] Epistemic pluralists, such as John Rawls, sidestep the issue of whether all values can be consistently realized, measured and ranked in favor of an account of pluralism based on reason and its limits. Given the epistemic barriers to arriving at a comprehensive doctrine, a democratic state cannot reasonably resolve deep disagreements between citizens by endorsing a single overarching worldview, or at least not without supporting oppressive and antipluralist policies.

Why choose democracy when reasonable people disagree about what constitutes the best form of government? Or, from the perspective of the democrat, "How is democracy possible under conditions of pluralism?"[11] Rawls's answer to this question is complex. It involves foregoing a philosophically rich (or thick) defence of democracy for a proceduralist (or thin) defence in order to accommodate the fact of pluralism. Citizens find agreement on a set of highly abstract principles of justice to govern the "basic structure of society," principles which it would be reasonable to support regardless of one's philosophical or religious worldview.

Talisse sharply distinguishes Rawls's proceduralist approach to harmonizing democracy and pluralism with the substantive approach of civic republican

Michael Sandel. Pluralism factors into both of their accounts of democracy because it constitutes a significant obstacle to democratic will-formation, to "an account of democracy that at least in principle could win the consent of all reasonable persons."[12] Rawls overcomes the obstacle by settling on a thin theory of democracy. Rather than offering the philosophically best form of government, democracy provides a set of reasonable procedures for both making collective decisions and negotiating the perpetual problem of pluralism. In contrast, Sandel's civic republicanism demands that persons assimilate their separate and rival worldviews to the community's single standard of virtuous citizenship. Therefore, Talisse concludes that the thickness of Sandel's democratic theory makes it patently antipluralist. Likewise, the thickness of Dewey's theory, particularly in its embrace of inquiry and intelligence as prerequisites for citizenship, qualifies it as antipluralist.

III. Three Charges

In this section, I level three charges at Talisse's pluralist objection to Deweyan democracy, as follows. Of the three, the final charge is the most critical and consequential for evaluating the strength of my argument.

Charge One

For Isaiah Berlin, individuals select their values from among a universe of competing possibilities. According to this value ontology, human ends exist in a very real sense because they resemble distinct, incommensurable and often incompatible moral goods. Since "the ends of men are many, and not all of them are in principle compatible with each other," persons must choose some values and reject others in cultivating their own value schema.[13] No single metric can assist these value-choosers in rank-ordering the incommensurable options. Also, it proves impossible for every possible value or end to manifest in a comprehensive set or unitary system. In Berlin's words, "the belief that some single formula can in principle be found whereby all diverse ends of men can be harmoniously realized is demonstrably false."[14] Intractable value conflicts therefore become an unassailable fact of human moral life. Inasmuch as moral agents will always have differences among their philosophical, theological and moral commitments, the "necessity of choosing between absolute claims is then an inescapable characteristic of the human condition."[15] Hence, in Berlin's theory of valuation, values *qua* moral goods have an undeniably existential quality, and value pluralism resembles an "inescapable" feature of the "human condition."

Talisse views Deweyan democracy through the prism of Berlin's value ontology and not through Dewey's own theory of valuation. First, he characterizes the notion of democracy found in Dewey's works as wedded to "the republican notion of freedom," not unlike Sandel's civic republicanism.[16] According to this account, humans deserve their status as free citizens only insofar as they embody a set of common

values. Favorably quoting John Stuhr, Talisse agrees that in "the widest sense" Dewey's philosophy "simply *is* social and political philosophy," and thus Deweyan democracy must be a thick or substantive theory. "If Stuhr is correct," he notes, "then Deweyan democracy is inextricably bound up with a deep, comprehensive worldview about which it seeks agreement."[17] Since, on Berlin's analysis, an all-encompassing value system cannot reconcile itself with the inescapable fact of pluralism, Dewey's account of democracy must be incompatible with pluralism too.

The difficulty with Talisse's reading of Deweyan democracy is that he filters it through Berlin's value ontology. In doing this, he also fails to treat Deweyan democracy on its own terms, that is, relative to Dewey's own theory of valuation. Through the social activity of appraisal or evaluation, private preferences, or what Dewey terms "prizings" (i.e., what is valued or desired), are converted into publicly shared values (i.e., what is valuable or desirable).[18] For Dewey, values do not possess an existential quality in the Berlinian sense, except insofar as the prizing agent decides to appraise or evaluate objects in concert with others. Moreover, value-choosers do not naturally rank-order their ends with the intention of constructing a catalogue or ontological schema of accepted values. Indeed, for Dewey, logic is always prior to ontology. Since logic is a theory of inquiry, any shared values must first undergo collective investigation and experimentation before being settled "over and above board," that is, as the products of social inquiry.[19] Therefore, Deweyan democracy does not offer a "comprehensive worldview" or unitary system of values, but rather *a* way, among many others, to reconcile different and often-times conflicting value orientations into a "mode of associated living."[20]

How might this reconciliation occur? For Dewey, it happens through ongoing inquiry at the local level, by members of the community dedicated to settling differences among those "values which . . . [distinct] groups sustain."[21] Dewey understands a group impacted, either negatively or positively, by the activities of other groups as a "public," that is, "all those affected by the indirect consequences of [other groups'] transactions."[22] While publics will often contain members with conflicting interests, their members are similarly affected by the problematic consequences of others' activities. According to Paul Stob, "Dewey's terms speak not of what the public *is* but of what the public can *do*."[23] Once the individuals belonging to a public acknowledge their shared situation, the occasion arises for them to engage in collective discourse and action aimed at the disclosure and clarification of their shared values as well as the settling of their differences.[24] This is not to deny the fact of pluralism but to offer a method for negotiating the conflicts that grow out of, to borrow Berlin's words, this "inescapable characteristic of the human condition."[25]

Charge Two

According to John Rawls, legitimacy and stability within a democratic society require a neutral framework of principles to which all citizens may appeal in their

use of public reason. Principles of justice provide fair terms of cooperation through a system of rights and protections that can successfully accommodate the "fact of reasonable pluralism"—or the reality that citizens with deep differences need to coexist in peaceful and tolerant ways.[26] Otherwise, without the rights and protections afforded by liberal institutions, majorities would endanger the freedom of minorities, impose upon them a single conception of the good, and consequently jeopardize the polity's stability. To ascertain what those fair terms of cooperation would be, citizens engage in a thought experiment, imagining themselves in an "original position" of perfect equality, where they would choose the principles to govern a just society without knowledge of their personal endowments or their private fortunes in the eventual distribution of goods. Public reason limits the content of public discourse to exclusively political subject-matter, to those issues one would contemplate in the thought experiment of the original position, or to what Rawls refers to as the "basic structure of a just society."[27]

Rawls employs a "political conception of liberalism" in order to negotiate the problem of legitimacy and stability in a pluralist society. According to this conception, the plurality of views and values that citizens hold should overlap and, in the area of shared agreement, yield a principled account of justice.[28] This "overlapping consensus" is made possible by two characteristics of citizens: (i) their status as free and equal citizens and (ii) their common understanding of political society as a "fair system" of long-term cooperation.[29] Rawls's notion of public reason supplies an ideal for citizens to struggle towards in regulating their political talk: "[T]he ideal of public reason is that citizens are to conduct their fundamental discussions within the framework of what each regards as a political conception of justice based on values that the others can reasonably be expected to endorse and each is, in good faith, prepared to defend that conception so understood."[30] As a result, citizens who attempt to realize the ideal of public reason bracket the diverse aspects of their worldviews when engaging in public discourse about matters of justice.

The restrictions on what kinds of reasons count as public reveal that Rawlsian democracy is far more substantive than Talisse's account suggests. According to Rawls, public reasons must also be offered in the specific setting of "public forums," including legislative, executive and judicial institutions as well as among citizens voting "in elections when constitutional essentials and matters of basic justice are at stake."[31] Consequently, if they are to count as public, those reasons offered must pertain to political issues, such as matters of justice and questions concerning the constitution—in other words, to the subject-matter of a "political conception of justice."[32] Therefore, these significant limitations on the substance of public discourse make Rawls's democratic theory less proceduralist (or more substantive) than Talisse would wish to concede.

Talisse filters Deweyan democracy through Rawls's notion of reasonable pluralism at the expense of ignoring Dewey's analogous, though comparably richer,

principle of growth. Instead of an overlapping consensus between otherwise divergent worldviews, the ethical principle of growth recommends that individuals and groups cultivate those experiences that will liberate their potentialities.[33] Education is the *sine qua non* for realizing the possibilities of human development and growth: "Since life means growth, a living creature lives as truly and positively at one stage as at another, with the same intrinsic fullness and the same absolute claims. Hence education means the enterprise of supplying the conditions which ensure growth, or adequacy of life, irrespective of age."[34] While Dewey explicitly identifies education as a condition for growth, he refrains from specifying exactly what growth would entail or its meaning in the concrete. Instead, working out personal and collective conceptions of growth (or self-realization) is a task better left for individuals and groups to undertake, not for philosophers or politicians to preordain.

Besides education, another prerequisite for growth is the ability to solve problems. For Dewey, the breadth of content that can potentially count as subject-matter for collective problem solving and public discourse is virtually limitless. Human reason features strongly in experience because problem solving, or inquiry, is a natural human activity, both in politics as well as other domains of life.[35] If, as Popper generalizes, "all life is problem solving," or, as Dewey observes, inquiries "enter into every area of life and into every aspect of every area," then claiming that democratic citizens should become increasingly adept at individual and group problem solving is distinctly different from advancing a state-sponsored worldview.[36] Instead, it is merely to restate the fact that humans are naturally problem-solvers; to observe that humans who are citizens of democracies confront common problems; and then to infer from the fact and observation that the challenge for democratic citizens is to become better collaborative problem-solvers. Thus, Dewey selectively emphasizes one common feature of human experience, i.e., the regularity with which humans confront and resolve problematic situations, in order to demonstrate that problem-solving partnerships in democracies tend to facilitate the personal and collective growth of their citizens.[37]

Charge Three

Finally, and most troubling, Talisse's pluralist objection erects a strict and exclusive dichotomy between substantive and proceduralist conceptions of democracy. This charge strikes at the heart of a key distinction relied on by many democratic theorists.[38] Deliberative democrats Amy Gutmann and Dennis Thompson, for instance, try to refute the position that deliberation should be purely proceduralist, or that "the collective outcomes produced [by democratic deliberation] need no further justification beyond the rationale for the method itself."[39] Yet, despite Gutmann and Thompson's concern and what David Estlund calls a "flight from substance in democratic theory," it is almost impossible to find a democratic theorist who endorses a purely proceduralist theory of democracy.[40] Substantive or value-laden

constraints on the process and outcome of democratic procedures are an inevitable feature of most, if not all, theories of democracy—even in Rawls's theory. By the same logic, most so-called 'substantive theories of democracy' also have at least some proceduralist characteristics. Thus, there is a rupture between the strict and exclusive conceptualization of the distinction and the actual features of most, if not all, democratic theories.[41]

One possible way to remedy this problem is to reconstruct the substantive-proceduralist distinction. "To oppose one to the other is," Dewey warns, "to set the moving tendency and the final result of the same process over against each other."[42] His warning, although referring to the opposition between child and curriculum, applies with equal force to a strict and exclusive distinction between substantive and proceduralist democracy. Alternatively, the process and result might be conceived as a continuum, a continuous gradation of more or less proceduralist, as well as more or less substantive, democratic theories, not a quantum leap between those with purely proceduralist credentials and others with purely substantive credentials.

This brings us to the issue of where to locate Deweyan democracy along the proceduralist-substantive continuum. According to the charitable interpretation of his position, Talisse claims that democracy as a way of life is substantially thicker (or more substantive) than Rawls's theory, and so is on par with Sandel's civic republicanism. Thus, Deweyan democracy proves to be incompatible with full-fledged pluralism, or the view that value conflict is an intransigent feature of human life. However, on closer examination, democracy as a way of life shows itself to be significantly thinner than Talisse is willing to acknowledge. Dewey advances a theory of democracy that is both predominantly proceduralist and strikingly similar to contemporary theories of deliberative democracy.[43] Instead of a monumental event (e.g., a constitutional convention), democratic deliberation for Dewey is an on-going process of everyday discourse, a "back-and-forth give-and-take discussion" and a "conversation," in which one conception, or set of conceptions, replaces another as the plans and projects of the community change.[44] Community members working in concert with experts discuss and collectively decide how to understand their shared conceptions in the best possible light, or as would ideally suit their public values, and to solve their common problems and restructure their shared institutions accordingly.[45]

So, by empowering citizens to develop, deliberate about and test their shared ideals, Deweyan democracy operates in a more proceduralist fashion than Talisse believes. Moreover, Deweyan democracy does not impose burdensome prior restraints or value-specific conditions on what is to count as an ultimately true conception. It resembles neither a purely substantive theory of democracy nor an oppressive state-sanctioned doctrine in the Rawlsian sense. Thus, fair procedures of, for instance, deliberation and negotiation permit reasonable citizens, distinct groups and state agents in a Deweyan democracy to disagree without resorting to violence.[46]

IV. Dewey's Pluralist Procedure in Action

In this penultimate section, I would like to complete my response to Talisse by articulating Dewey's pragmatic pluralist procedure, a contemporary Deweyan's interpretation of it and a highly relevant illustration of Deweyan democracy and Dewey's pragmatic standard in action

A Pragmatic Pluralist Procedure

What is Dewey's own pragmatic standard of inclusion? In short, it is a highly procedural standard that asks and answers two questions. The first pertains to the plurality of interests held in common by different groups. It queries those groups, "How numerous and varied are the interests which are commonly shared?"[47] The second question concerns whether groups are open to readjusting their ways of associating. It asks, "How full and free is the interplay [of conventional forms of association] with other forms of association?"[48] Dewey's procedure for addressing the fact of pluralism might be called the 'mutual interest and associative flexibility' standard of inclusion.

Among Dewey's many writings on politics and the political events of his times, one in particular, "The Principle of Nationality," showcases the relationship between democracy, pluralism and reason.[49] In this work, he distinguishes political and cultural nationality in order to demonstrate that the problem of pluralism—or, in his terminology, the "question of nationality" (particularly, claims of minority groups to self-determination)—stems from a confusion of the two.[50] Unlike Rawls, Dewey does not seek to set aside all metaphysical claims about the superiority of one worldview to another in favor of a purely political solution to the problem of pluralism. "The remedy [for the problem of nationality or pluralism] will not be found," Dewey contends, "by continuing the claim to complete sovereign rights but in provision for a maximum of cultural independence along with systematic provisions for free industrial and economic interdependence."[51] Dewey wishes to grant minorities greater freedom of cultural expression but without insulating them from the wider society. To guard against the prospect of increasing insularity, he recommends that minority groups increase their dependence upon other groups for their economic well-being, particularly through the activities of work and trade.

Another one of Dewey's essays, "The Fruits of Nationalism," explores the implications of the complex concept of national sovereignty for the interests of a nation's citizens.[52] Although the existence of a nation as an "historic community of traditions and outlook" is a concrete "reality," Dewey believes that "the notion of national interests" can also become "an abstraction, a fiction" when the nation is animated "into a Person who has a touchy and testy Honor to be defended and avenged at the cost of death and destruction."[53] Indeed, this species of "animism" and the concomitant appeals by national leaders to the "national interest" can have

the effect of marginalizing minority groups that do not share the majority's moral and patriotic values. While Dewey never explicitly mentions pluralism, the concept lurks in the background of the discussion. An extreme and uncritical variety of patriotic nationalism threatens a nation's citizens with xenophobia, balkanization, lack of group recognition (or misrecognition), incessant foreign wars and oppressive treatment of insular minorities. Although there is no surefire solution to the ills of nationalism, Dewey argues that any inquiry should begin by acknowledging that "[i]t is to the interests of a nation that its citizens be protected from pestilence, from unnecessary infection; that they enjoy a reasonable degree of economic comfort and independence; that they be protected from crime, from external invasion, etc."[54] Otherwise, the doctrine of national sovereignty excuses the majority-controlled government to exercise unlimited coercive power, whether in its relations with foreign powers or in its dealings with dissident minorities inside its own boundaries (so-called 'nations within a nation').

In light of Dewey's analyses, the doctrine of national sovereignty and the question of nationality suggest two problematic ways to negotiate the fact of pluralism, viz., by appeal to a highly substantive democratic theory or by state force. According to Dewey's two-step pluralist procedure, members of different groups (whether majority or minority) should, first, identify their shared interests and, second, propose novel and flexible ways of associating in order to address their shared problems. Therefore, democracy as a way of life represents a method, not a state-sponsored worldview—a procedure for negotiating, though not permanently resolving, the deeply divisive and sometimes intractable differences between peoples and groups beholden to competing forms of life.

Caspary on Conflict Mediation

Despite Dewey having expressed views on pluralism through his writings on nationalism and national sovereignty, the cogency of my argument could still be questioned because Talisse's objection is directed against Deweyan democracy (or contemporary Deweyans' interpretations of Dewey's democratic theory), not Dewey's own theory of democracy. So, in this section, I demonstrate that William Caspary's interpretation of Deweyan democracy as a form of conflict mediation is a natural extension of Dewey's pluralist procedure, and also that Talisse's critique of Caspary's interpretation is unjustified.

Caspary proposes that what Dewey calls "social intelligence" should be construed expansively, particularly in a way that makes it tantamount to the techniques of conflict resolution or mediation. "Dewey's belief in the creative power of conflict-resolution . . . [follows from] his belief in 'social intelligence.'"[55] Similar to conflict resolution, social intelligence is a method for ameliorating tensions; intelligent in the sense that it resembles a method of effective problem solving; and social in the dual sense that it "can expand with each generation" and "is available to all citizens."[56]

Caspary identifies five features held in common by Dewey's approach to social intelligence and conflict resolution frameworks: (i) statement of the parties' interests ("interests must be articulated and placed on the agenda"); (ii) empathetic listening ("stakeholders have to listen respectfully to the interests and concerns of others"); (iii) identification of shared, flexible interests, rather than rigid value schemes ("the parties to the conflict will have to identify their broad underlying interests, and let go of narrow 'fixed ends'"); (iv) the creation of novel ways to associate ("conflict-resolution involves discovery and invention of new modes of action and new meanings, which establish common goals"); and (v) mutual accord on administrative and evaluative processes ("satisfactory completion of public conflict-resolution requires explicit agreements on courses of action, procedures for implementation, and monitoring procedures").[57] Notice that the third and fourth features shared by Dewey's notion of social intelligence and the method of conflict resolution are identical to the two steps in Dewey's pluralist procedure. First, parties to a conflict must identify their overlapping interests. Second, novel ways for associating, ways that minimize adversarial tension and maximize collaborative engagement, should be invented.

Robert Talisse criticizes Caspary's account of Deweyan democracy as a method of conflict mediation because it cannot deal with "tragic conflicts," or disputes in which parties to it possess incommensurable values. Caspary must weasel out of the difficulty by denying the existence of tragic conflicts. According to Talisse, "Caspary correctly observes that Deweyan democracy is inconsistent with the existence of tragic conflicts; however, this does not entail that there are no tragic conflicts."[58] However, in many of these tragic conflicts, such as volatile labor-management disputes, the mediator helps the parties agree on a procedure (or means) to resolve their dispute, thereby sidestepping their deeper disagreements over values (or ends). According to Charles E. Lindblom, the key to "muddling through" such tragic conflict is for parties to agree on means, not ends: "the contestants cannot agree on criteria for settling their disputes but can agree on specific proposals. Similarly, when one's . . . objective turns out to be another's means, they often can agree on policy."[59] Likewise, Kwame Anthony Appiah notes that, "[w]e can live together without agreeing on what the values are that make it good to live together; we can agree about what to do in most cases, without agreeing what is right."[60] So, despite Talisse's objection that Caspary's account of Deweyan democracy cannot handle tragic conflicts, democracy as a way of life conceived as a way of resolving conflicts can accommodate incompatible values by side-stepping consensus on values and proceeding to negotiations over appropriate means (what to do, proposals or policies).

An Example

By way of illustration, I want to suggest that membership in queer communities might be controlled by a pluralist procedure of inclusion similar to the one Dewey and Caspary have articulated. While the literature on queer culture and gay

marriage is extensive, less has been written on the notion of family within queer culture and queer communities.[61] As noted, for Dewey, pluralism is an empirical and normative concept that identifies patterns on inclusion and exclusion within and between particular cultures. It is also a procedure that when followed reduces, if not overcomes, deep differences between and within cultural groups. Caspary, a contemporary Deweyan democrat, teases out the irenic dimension of Dewey's pluralist procedure and infers that the objective of Deweyan democracy is, indeed, to ameliorate, and ideally resolve, conflicts.

According to the 'family' criterion of inclusion, anyone is considered queer or part of the queer community so long as they have been marginalized or excluded from the dominant community. So, despite heteronormative views (or one might call them 'heterosexual prejudices') to the contrary, being homosexual is not the relevant standard for being a member of a queer community. In Michael Warner's book *The Trouble With Normal*, he explains: "If there is such a thing as a gay [or queer] way of life, it consists in these [family] relations, a welter of intimacies outside the framework of professions and institutions and ordinary obligations."[62] Those standing outside the networks of life widely considered 'normal' have identified their shared interests and developed novel ways for associating, ways that define what it means to be part of a queer community. Of course, members must also be open and tolerant of others who find themselves, for whatever reasons (chosen or not), on the margins of the dominant community and its norms.

Even though pluralism in queer communities is highly proceduralist, built into it are some substantive limitations on membership which vary from community to community. For instance, some queer communities treat bisexuals and, to a lesser degree, transsexuals as occupying a place on the margins of the community. Those who are afforded the least tolerance, and sometimes expressly excluded, from queer communities are adult persons who have (illegal) sexual relations with children, otherwise known as 'pedophiles.' Nevertheless, gay communities use a very thin approach to gate-keeping, accepting most people who have been marginalized from the dominant or 'normal' society. Therefore, the 'family' criterion delivers patterns of inclusion and exclusion that tend toward greater inclusivity. Similar to queer communities, Deweyan democratic communities more often include than exclude potential members. When complaints about marginalization occur, members typically invoke the family notion as a way of identifying their shared interests and suggesting new and flexible ways to associate—ways that will hopefully relieve the problematic conditions that engendered the initial conflict.

V. Conclusion

To conclude, Talisse's pluralist objection fails to convince Deweyans to drop the language of pluralism because democracy as a way of life does not endorse a

state-sponsored comprehensive worldview or an incommensurable scheme of values. However, one might object that the queer communities illustration risks reading Dewey's ideas through an alien filter. While I acknowledge that appeals to fairly recent socio-political phenomena could function in ways similar to Talisse's Berlinian and Rawlsian filters, I nevertheless believe that the pragmatic value of the practice justifies the risk.[63] Not only does it help us to see the contemporary relevance of Dewey's ideas, but it also assists Dewey scholars in declining invitations to give up the language of contemporary political theory. As John Herman Randall declared, "[t]he best way of honoring Dewey is to work on Dewey's problems—to reconstruct his insights, to see, if need be, farther than Dewey saw."[64] By repelling Talisse's objection, the stage is thereby set not only to reunite Deweyan democracy and pluralism but also to appreciate the continued relevance of Dewey's pluralist procedure for contemporary problems of group recognition, ethno-cultural conflict and difference accommodation in contemporary multicultural societies.[65]

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Notes

1. Robert B. Talisse, "Can Democracy Be a Way of Life? Deweyan Democracy and the Problem of Pluralism," *Transactions of the C. S. Peirce Society* 39.1 (Winter 2003): 1–21, 13.

2. This analogy is suggested in Christopher Gill's introduction to his translation of Plato's *Symposium* (New York: Penguin, 1999), xiii.

3. The expression most famously appears in the address written by Dewey and read by Horace M. Kallen at his eightieth birthday party. See "Creative Democracy—The Task Before Us," LW 14:225–6. Citations are to *The Collected Works of John Dewey: Electronic Edition*, ed. L. A. Hickman (Charlottesville, VA: Intelex Corp., 1996), following the conventional method, LW (Later Works) or MW (Middle Works) or Early Works (EW), volume:page number.

4. Talisse, "Can Democracy be a Way of Life?" 13. More recently, Talisse's argument against Deweyan pluralist democracy has become an ambitious project to reject Deweyan democracy *en toto*. Id., *A Pragmatist Philosophy of Democracy* (New York: Routledge, 2007). Id., "Farewell to Deweyan Democracy," paper presented at the APA Eastern Division meeting; abstract available in *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association* 81.1 (September 2007): 107.

5. Talisse, "Can Democracy be a Way of Life?" 1.

6. Ibid.

7. Ibid., 2.

8. Ibid., 3.

9. In an earlier collaboration with his then-graduate student, Scott Aikin, Talisse claims that there are three kinds of pluralism: (i) ontological or deep pluralism, (ii) epistemic or shallow pluralism, and (iii) *modus vivendi* pluralism. The first two are identical to those he articulates in this article and the last is the liberal prescription for tolerance. See R. B. Talisse and S. F. Aikin, "Why Pragmatists Cannot Be Pluralists," *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 41.1 (winter 2005): 101–18, 101–4.

10. Ibid. Values are incompatible insofar as they advance propositions that cannot be part of a consistent set; incompossible insofar as they cannot exist together in the value scheme; and incommensurable insofar as they cannot be measured and ranked on the same scale.

11. Ibid., 5.

12. Talisse, "Can Democracy be a Way of Life?" 4.

13. Isaiah Berlin, "Two Concepts of Liberty," in *Four Essays on Liberty* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1969), 169.

14. Ibid.

15. Ibid.

16. Talisse, "Can Democracy be a Way of Life?" 7.

17. Ibid., 9.

18. Dewey, "Propositions of Appraisal" in *Theory of Valuation*, LW 13:216–8. Id., "The Construction of Good" in *The Quest for Certainty*, LW 4:207. Moreover, Dewey denies that individuals are typically cognizant of their own values: "Values and loyalties go together, for if you want to know what a man's values are do not ask him. One is rarely aware, with any high degree of perception, what are the values that govern one's conduct." "The Basic Values and Loyalties of Democracy," LW 14:275.

19. Albert G. A. Balz and John Dewey, "A Letter to Mr. Dewey Concerning John Dewey's Doctrine of Possibility, Published Together with His Reply," *The Journal of Philosophy* 46.11 (May 1949): 313–42, 335.

20. Dewey, "Belief and Existences," MW 9:93.

21. Dewey, "Search for the Great Community" in *The Public and Its Problems*, LW 2:328. In the sixth chapter of same text, entitled "The Problem of Method," Dewey writes: "Democracy must begin at home, and home is the neighborly community" LW 2:368.

22. Dewey, "Search for the Public" in *The Public and Its Problems*, LW 2:255.

23. P. Stob, "Kenneth Burke, John Dewey, and the Pursuit of the Public," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 38.3 (2005): 226–47, 237.

24. According to Paul Stob, "[a] discursive politics underlies . . . Dewey's understanding of the 'public.'" P. Stob, "Kenneth Burke, John Dewey, and the Pursuit of the Public," 234. Also, see R. Asen, "The Multiple Mr. Dewey: Multiple Publics and Permeable Borders in John Dewey's Theory of the Public Sphere," *Argumentation and Advocacy* 39 (2003): 174–88.

25. Berlin, "Two Concepts of Liberty," 169.

26. Rawls defines "reasonable pluralism" in the following way: "Under the political and social conditions secured by the basic rights and liberties of free institutions, a diversity of conflicting and irreconcilable yet reasonable comprehensive doctrines will come about and persist, should it not already exist. This fact about free societies is what I call the fact of reasonable pluralism." See J. Rawls, *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 34.

27. Ibid., 11–5.

28. Given the fact of reasonable pluralism, Rawls claims that social organization requires "a stable overlapping consensus of reasonable comprehensive doctrines." Ibid., 36, 43.

29. Rawls states that his account of political liberalism "endorses the underlying ideas of citizens as free and equal and of society as a fair system of cooperation over time." Id., *The Law of Peoples* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 141.

30. Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 226.

31. Ibid., 215.

32. For an argument that the narrow reading of public reason's scope, viz., that public reason only pertains to matters of basic justice and constitutional essentials, is less defensible than a broad reading, viz., that public reason extends to all choices in which the state wields coercive authority over citizens, see and J. Quong, "The Scope of Public Reason," *Political Studies* 52.2 (2004): 233–50.

33. According to Dewey, "[d]emocracy is a way of life controlled by a working faith in the possibilities of human nature." "Creative Democracy—The Task Before Us," LW 14:226.

34. Dewey, "Education as Growth," MW 9:56.

35. Inquiry is therefore an activity that encompasses Rawls's matters of basic justice (or the content of public reason), but also extends far beyond such matters to issues concerning what exists, what is true and what methods will permit inquirers to more effectively answer metaphysical questions. According to Tiles, "[h]ow to reach a consensus on an issue or a way of reconciling differences by relating them as 'perspectives' would be for Dewey only some of the problems calling for inquiry; problems also arise for individuals or for groups which are not simply about how to reach agreement. Problems arise with the *things* in our experience" J. E. Tiles, *Dewey* (London and New York: Routledge, 1988), 118. Quoted in David L. Hildebrand, *Beyond Realism and Anti-realism* (Nashville: Vanderbilt, 2003), 102.

36. Karl Popper, *All Life is Problem Solving* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 99. Dewey, "The Pattern of Inquiry" in *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry*, LW 12:106.

37. When these public-spirited partnerships are between average citizens and experts, Dewey illustrates how they function with the shoe analogy: "The man who wears the shoe knows best that it pinches, even if the expert shoemaker is the best judge of how the trouble is to be remedied. Popular government has at least created public spirit even if its success in informing that spirit has not been great." "The Problem of Method" in *The Public and Its Problems*, LW 2:364. James Campbell, *Understanding John Dewey* (Chicago: Open Court Publishing, 1995), 204–6. See Shane J. Ralston, "Deliberative Democracy as a Matter of Public Spirit: Reconstructing the Dewey-Lippmann Debate," *Contemporary Philosophy* 25.3–4 (2005):17–25, 21–2.

38. Jürgen Habermas, "Three Normative Models of Democracy" in *Democracy and Difference: Contesting the Boundaries of the Political*, ed. S. Benhabib (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 22–30. J. Cohen, "Substance and Procedure in Deliberative Democracy," in *Deliberative Democracy: Essays on Reason and Politics*, ed. J. Bohman and W. Rehg (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997), 407–38. At one point in his article, Talisse appears to anticipate this objection, stating that "[p]redictably, Deweyans will here launch a favorite rejoinder; they will object to what they call a 'false dichotomy' between pluralism and substantive democracy." However, the dichotomy is not between pluralism and substantive democracy, but between proceduralist and substantive democracy.

39. Amy Gutmann and Dennis Thompson, *Why Deliberative Democracy?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 15. Id., *Democracy and Disagreement* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996). Id., "Democratic Disagreement: Reply to Critics," in *Deliberative Politics: Essays on Democracy and Disagreement*, ed. S. Macedo (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 243–79.

40. David M. Estlund, *Democratic Authority* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 65. Gutmann and Thompson argue similarly that "[s]uch [substantive] principles should be included so that the theory [of deliberative democracy] can explicitly recognize that both substantive and procedural principles are subject to contestation in similar ways." Gutmann and Thompson, *Why Deliberative Democracy?*, 97.

41. Estlund echoes this point: "There is no interesting divide, then, between fully proceduralist theories of democracy, on the one hand, and impure theories that depart from merely procedural values, on the other." *Democratic Authority*, 82.

42. Dewey, *The Child and the Curriculum*, MW 2:278.

43. Ralston, "Deliberative Democracy as a Matter of Public Spirit." In *Liberalism and Social Action*, Dewey approvingly quotes Justice Brandeis, "public discussion is a public duty." "Renascent Liberalism," LW 11:48.

44. Dewey, "The One-World of Hitler's National Socialism," MW 8:443. During his ninetieth birthday party, Dewey remarked that, "Democracy begins in conversation." C. Lamont, *Dialogue on John Dewey* (New York: Horizon Press, 1959), 58, 88.

45. According to James Campbell, "conceptions [for Dewey] are tools to be used in our attempts to settle our social problems, and . . . they have an 'absolute' or 'final' meaning only in an abstract or definitional sense." Campbell, *Understanding John Dewey*, 184. Dewey states that these conceptions of, for instance, democracy, equality and liberty are ideal in that they "are not intended to be themselves realized but are meant to direct our course to the realization of potentialities in existent conditions." "General Theory of Propositions" in *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry*, LW 12:303.

46. Of course, this is an oversimplification of the multitude of potential conditions under which wider and narrower terms of civil (and procedural) discourse will be warranted. See D. M. Estlund, "Deliberation Down and Dirty: Must Political Expression Be Civil?" in *The Boundaries of Freedom of Expression and Order in American Democracy* (Kent, OH: Kent State University, 2001), 49–67. In *Liberalism and Social Action*, Dewey does stipulate an exception for his ban against state-sanctioned violence, or undemocratic means, to achieve democratic ends: "[W]hen society through an authorized majority has entered upon the path of social experimentation leading to great social change, and a minority refuses by force to

permit the method of intelligence [or intelligent social action] to go into effect. Then force may be intelligently employed to subdue and disarm the recalcitrant minority." "Renascent Liberalism," LW 11:61.

47. Dewey, "The Democratic Conception in Education" in *Democracy and Education*, MW 9:89.

48. Ibid.

49. Dewey, "The Principle of Nationality," MW 10:285–91.

50. Ibid., MW 10:286–288.

51. Ibid., MW 10:290.

52. Dewey, "The Fruits of Nationalism," LW 3:152–7.

53. Ibid., LW 3:155.

54. Ibid.

55. William R. Caspary, *Dewey on Democracy* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2000), 43.

56. Ibid., 44.

57. Ibid., 25–7.

58. Talisse, *A Pragmatist Philosophy of Democracy*, 50–1.

59. Charles E. Lindblom, "The Science of 'Muddling Through,' " *Public Administration Review* 19.1 (1959): 79–88, 83–4.

60. Kwame Anthony Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers* (New York and London: W.W. Norton and Company, 2006), 71.

61. D. Carlin and J. DiGrazia, *Queer Cultures* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2003); *Queer Families, Queer Politics: Challenging Culture and the State*, ed. M. Bernstein and R. Reimann (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001); V. Lehr, *Queer Family Values* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1999); K. Weston, *Families We Choose* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991).

62. M. Warner, *The Trouble With Normal: Sex, Politics and the Ethics of Queer Life* (New York: The Free Press, 1999), 116.

63. Perhaps such contemporary examples could be accompanied by a gentle caveat to the reader that any contemporary positions, theories or ideas are not Dewey's own.

64. Randall is favorably quoted by Gouinlock, "Introduction," liv. Originally, J. H. Randall, "John Dewey, 1859–1952," *The Journal of Philosophy* 50.1 (January 1953): 5–13, 13.

65. An excellent example of such a problem is the reasonable accommodation debate that arose recently in the Canadian province of Québec. C. Offman, "Canadians with Faces Veiled Can Vote," *National Post* (Sept 8, 2007). In the case of *Multani vs. Commission scolaire Marguerite-Bourgeoys* [2006] 1 S.C.R. 256, 2006 SCC 6, the Canadian Supreme Court determined that the decision of a school authority in Québec to prohibit a Sikh child from wearing a ceremonial dagger was contrary to the freedom of religion clause in the Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms. After public controversy arose over this decision and some Québec towns passed ordinances to prohibit similar displays of ethnic identity, the provincial government of Québec established a commission, officially titled the "Con-

sultation Commission on Accommodation Practices Related to Cultural Differences," to investigate ways in which to resolve the conflict. The Commission's 37-page report of its findings, entitled "Building the Future: A Time for Reconciliation," was published to mixed reviews. See J. Heinrich, "Bouchard, Taylor Deliver their Report," *The Gazette/Canada.com* (Wednesday June 11, 2008), available at http://www.canada.com/montrealgazette/story .html?id=7ee7c4cb-cbf8-4eb8-b90e-072205ebc2bb. Accessed July 1, 2008.