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1. Introduction

John Dewey's faith related approach to democracy and democratic institutions has sometimes elicited an awkward response from liberal commentators. Why talk about democratic *faith*? What does Dewey mean when he uses the term? Is it really necessary to assume that elements of faith help justify or explain a commitment to democracy or democracy itself? Does Dewey's idea that democratic participation is an expression of faith perhaps simply show that Dewey is at heart a religious thinker even though he attempts to secularize a faith based way of thinking? (See Dewey, 1892/1971, 8–9; Dewey, 1933/1986, 67; Ryan, 1995, 100–2). Closely related to such questioning is the more general criticism that Dewey's conception of democracy is a moral conception—rather than political—and cannot be taken seriously as a part of a political theory. Dewey's democratic theory is on that account nothing more than a "comprehensive doctrine." It has been argued that from a Rawlsian point of view Deweyan democracy can never become a sufficiently general political conception but will always imply moral demands, which in a pluralistic political environment anyone can "reasonably reject." (Talisse, 2003, 11–2). Dewey seems oblivious to such worries in his approach. To be politically and socially active is to express faith in liberal democracy. Moreover, participation in civic and political life is a form of self-realization and one way of leading a meaningful life (Dewey, 1935/1987, 20, 64).

   In this paper I will argue that Dewey's general conception of democracy captures a deep insight about the nature of decision-making in liberal

society. Dewey's democratic ideal in my view makes sense of a liberal, pluralist conception of democracy morally and epistemically. I show that dismissing Deweyan democracy on purported Rawlsian grounds for being or depending on a "comprehensive doctrine"—a morally laden view, which may well appeal to reasonable people, but can also be rejected reasonably—is mistaken.

Dewey's democratic outlook provides a way to understand the importance of participation in decision- and policy-making. Participatory democracy is an *epistemic approach* to democracy if ideal conditions of participatory democracy are also ideal conditions of decision- and policy-making. In order for the individual to become committed to democracy it must be seen not only as an offer to become part of decision-making, but also as a framework for "social intelligence" to design and create the best solutions (See e.g. Dewey, 1935/1987, 38; Dewey, 1916/2008, 105). If a *moral* view of democracy emphasizes participation on the grounds that participation best reflects a self-rule principle inherent in all democratic strategies, on the *epistemic* view participation is rather emphasized because increased diversity of decision-makers increases the quality of decisions made and their responsiveness to experience (See e.g. Landemore, 2013, 103). Without this epistemic side, Deweyan democracy could not offer the rich vision of political meaning that it does.

This democratic framework moreover creates conditions of revision since democratic decisions are responsive to experience. Revisability is one of the main characteristics of democracy that links it to science in Dewey's view (Dewey & Tufts, 1932/1985, 365–6; Westbrook, 2010, 25; Cochran, 2010, 314; Dewey, 1927/1984, 365–6). The fallibility of a democratic decision facilitates sensitivity to new information and its "method" therefore resembles the method of science: It enables a dynamic relation between experience and decision-making. A decision can in light of more experience be surpassed by another option, unseen or not available before just as is the case in the revisionary enterprise that characterizes the method of science (Dewey, 1927/1984, 337–8). Reasons for the acceptance of democracy can be seen as analogous to reasons for accepting the method of science: Democracy is not about bargaining to get the most for oneself out of common decisions, but acting so as to allow the full capacity of "the demos" to make the best, (or smartest) decisions, all the while minding the common good, where convergence to truth and to what is in the long run best for everyone, coincide (Dewey, 1892/1971, 8). My conclusion in this paper is that the best defense of Deweyan democracy is

epistemic. This is a practical defense: If the scientific community provides a background of critical participants in corroborating and accepting truths, the community at large should play an analogous role in democratic decision-making, where the effort should be on the one hand to elicit what the public "knows" and on the other to engage not only in debates but also in common inquiry.

2. The problem of modern society as the *problem of pluralism*

Participation in social and political affairs is often seen as an important component in civic virtue in liberal democratic society. Since participation, even participation in selecting leaders, is necessarily voluntary any attempt to translate virtue into duty would be to abandon liberal principles for the sake of an oppressive "comprehensive doctrine." As John Rawls has argued such duties amount to coercion in which a particular view of the good life is taken for granted (Rawls, 2001, 183). Political conceptions must be independent of any particular view of the good life since otherwise anyone could reasonably reject them. One could say—in a more practical sense—that political conceptions must be independent of any trade-offs. In this way they are absolute, i.e. they can be adopted whatever else is taken for granted about society or human nature.

A *political conception*, such as the idea that justice is best understood as a general and universally valid demand for fairness, on the other hand, is a sufficiently unrejectable doctrine to serve as a basis for the constitutional structure of society. This is in a nutshell a central problem that liberal thinkers have brought out clearly during the last two centuries: Civic virtues associated with participation cannot be translated into duties of participation.

This is also the basis for the most common and general liberal criticism of communitarianism. Engagement in communal life rests on the embeddedness of the individual self in communal practices where moral ideals, as well as the most mundane views and habits can only arise from the reality of culture (Taylor, 1989, 204). The individual is committed to such values and therefore is neither fully able to resist what community prescribes, nor choose ways of life that contradict community values. Thus community imposes limits on the individual, whereas it is unclear how or whether the individual can impose limits on communal guidance. Pluralism appears from this point of view as a form of resistance to communal authority. It acknowledges that values are not independent of cultural

practices yet insists that they are ultimately a matter of individual choice. Thus pluralism imposes limits on community by placing individual acceptance or choice above cultural practice. From the liberal point of view the pursuit of happiness is, crucially, an individual affair and this has serious consequences. The primacy of individual choice is one of the key characteristics of society that distinguish it from community. On the liberal model, in society, the individual places limits on authority, not vice versa, as conceptions of justice and individual rights replace (at least to some extent) cultural practices.

John Rawls describes "the fact of Pluralism" as the point at which society must be distinguished from community. According to the theory "democratic society is hospitable to many communities within it [...] but it is not itself a community nor can it be in view of the fact of reasonable pluralism. For that would require the oppressive use of government power which is incompatible with basic democratic liberties" (Rawls, 2001, 21). In other words, an individual may well be born into a certain community, but as a member of society he/she has a choice of values and may also choose a community to belong to. Communities within the same society may have widely different cultural characteristics, since society imposes no direct restrictions on them. But the idea that society hosts different communities is far from being unproblematic.

Citizenship, however, does not need community membership. An individual belonging to society and able to engage in political dialogue can choose not to belong to any particular community and therefore society doesn't depend on a community based structure. The set of values basic for society can be defined in entirely procedural terms (on this view). They have to do with reasonable assumptions about the necessary common ground for things to work, not with aspirations about common life. To insist on community as the only authentic source of value however is to prefer multiculturalism to pluralism: Multiculturalism is then understood as the general idea of social structure where communities are actors and society refrains from interfering with communally protected cultural practices. Pluralism on the other hand protects the autonomous choice of the individual, whose rights to abandon any cultural practice are more important than community rights. The "fact of pluralism" can therefore lead to contradictory results. Community is the social environment necessary to foster beliefs, values and moral commitments that could be reasonably rejected if taken out of that particular context. Society hosts communities and provides the space for the "overlapping consensus" where individu-

als and communities can, in light of what is shared between them find po-
litical conceptions that they are in reasonable agreement about. But since
society, on this view, does not promote cultural practices, it is difficult to
see how it can be a source of shared value rather than just a place where
values may (or may not) overlap. A paradox follows: Society should gen-
erate value (but cannot), while community is a source of values whose
form that makes them in most cases unfit for public reason. This is what
I call the *problem of pluralism*.

Value-pluralism depends on a social environment that prioritizes the
coexistence of incompatible values over the creation of common values.
We are left with two sets of values—those that overlap and those that
don't—and the distinction between them is both unclear and uncomfort-
able. While it seems clear that values that do overlap are needed to place
a limit on the scope and validity of values that do not overlap, it is also
unclear how such limits can be described and justified. One might be
tempted to dissolve the paradox by accepting multiculturalism. That how-
ever would clearly mean abandoning liberalism and thereby pluralism.
Society would become the market square of communities and politics re-
duced to bargaining. Assuming that this is an unacceptable result one
must conclude that society, rather than community is the source of a num-
ber of basic common values, determining at least procedural issues, which
then must be prioritized over whatever is community generated or culture
bound. This is also Rawls's solution. But there are compelling reasons not
to accept that either.

Given the understanding of multiculturalism and pluralism that I have
outlined, there is a choice to be made between options that prioritize ei-
ther individual rights (liberalism) or community (communitarianism). In
contemporary political philosophy this is a familiar conflict. The prob-
lems with multiculturalism are also fairly obvious: Although it certainly
does not exclude the idea that the public sphere/political society can
be seen as a source of value, it does not promote that idea. It seems
to make relativism about values and cultures inevitable. It seems there-
fore to leave us with an intolerably narrow space of political deliberation.
Multiculturalism and pluralism then, in the sense described, provide the
inspiration for quite different kinds of policies and outlooks. There is
good reason to conclude that the problem with both is an inability to
provide the means to articulate basic commitments of society in accept-
able ways. Since contemporary societies are to an always greater extent
multicultural—i.e. inhabited by many rather than just one cultural group—

it seems unavoidable to bring cultural difference to bear on political soci-ety, rather than seeking to conceive of it as essentially neutral to or inde-pendent of cultural difference.

While Rawls certainly does suggest ways to avoid what I have called the problem of pluralism (Rawls, 2001, 192-3) it seems to me that his dis-tinction between comprehensive doctrines and political conceptions will have to be abandoned to properly address the problem I have described. In the next section I will argue that this makes the Deweyan approach attractive. Thus I conclude that the criticism of Deweyan democracy men-tioned at the beginning of this paper is misplaced. Rather one should be worried about the proper use and understanding of the idea of compre-hensive doctrine.

3. Dewey and the democratic ideal: Community

Dewey described democracy as a "way of life". For him that means par-ticipation "according to capacity" in public decisions and "according to need" or desire in forming values. He also characterized democracy as "a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience" (Dewey, 1916/1980, 93; 1927/1984, 327–8) . One can interpret Dewey's discussion as outlining a framework or a semantic space where concepts such as "associated living" or "communicated experience," point to the social dimensions he was particularly interested in. He repeatedly claims that democracy demands "social return" from every individual and that democracy liberates "man's capacities" (Dewey, 1916/1980, 98). A related claim emphasizes how, in a democracy, "all share in useful service and enjoy a worthy leisure" (Dewey, 1916/1980, 265).

Thus the logic of democracy involves a give and take, but there is no particular argument given to justify it (See also Westbrook, 2005, 179). One's contribution (according to capacity) creates a claim (according to need). The individual has duties to society and society has correspond-ing duties towards him or her. Such mutual dependence of individual and society yields a dynamic that generates values. Intellectual freedom, cultural and intellectual diversity, growth and participation are examples of central values made possible by this democratic dynamic. Democracy for Dewey is thus primary: It is an ideal because of the conditions for value formation that it creates. Other values also can be derived from the democratic ideal (See Dewey, 1927/1984, 327, 329).

Although for Dewey democracy is on the one hand a moral choice, it is misleading to think of it as a choice. Society makes democracy necessary. Of course it is possible to opt out of democratic participation—in a liberal society no one is forced to participate—but that is not the same thing as a "reasonable rejection" of some form of democracy. We should see Dewey's argument as an attempt to convince his audience that other options than democracy will not work long-term as organizational principles for society. In a later piece Dewey tries to show why liberalism and democracy are better than e.g. Nazism and Stalinism (Dewey, 1935/1987, 60–1, 64). The distinction drawn between "democracy as a social idea" and "democracy as a system of government" also creates a dynamic between the system and the idea: The system is criticized and improved by going back to the idea, rather than by abandoning the idea where going back to the idea means reflecting on the communal practice associated with it in the first place (Dewey, 1927/1984, 325–6).

Dewey's claim is not that democracy is just one of many possible choices of a way to organize society or one way to live. It is the only possible framework to face the ever-increasing intricacies of the modern world. It is not so much its daunting complexity that makes democracy necessary, but its unmapped territories, the uncertainty of consequences of decisions and therefore the continuous exploration that the modern world requires. "Community" is familiar environment, where routine and past experiences simplify tasks and create some certainty. Society means conflict and therefore Dewey argues that one of the goals of modern society—the "great society" as Dewey speaks of it using Graham Wallas's term—should be its transformation into a new kind of community. In what Dewey calls the "great community" individuals have re-appropriated ways that characterize community to share knowledge and combine forces in dealing with social problems and conflicts (Dewey, 1927/1984, 333–4). The problem with Dewey's account here might be a certain unwillingness to face up to the idea that some conflicts of society are persistent, he sometimes seems to think that social conflicts can always be resolved if enough effort and intelligence is put into it (See Rogers, 2012, 28).

It has been argued that John Dewey as a political thinker is just as committed to communitarian ways of conceptualizing the political and social, as to liberal ways. Richard Bernstein has pointed out that the traditional opposition of communitarian vs. liberal values is simply absent in Dewey (Bernstein, 2010, 301). Since the contemporary notion of communitarianism was not current when Dewey wrote his better-known works in the

twenties and thirties however he never referred to himself as a communitarian. Much of his political philosophy is devoted to defending the version of liberalism he favored and referred to as "renascent liberalism" at one point (Dewey, 1935/1987, 41). To portray him as a communitarian as some people argue (See Ryan, 1995, 100–1) is unhelpful since his main emphasis in contrasting his favored view of liberalism with its less attractive forms such as "laissez faire liberalism" is a richer conception of social control and socialized economy as what individuals should be able to expect from the state. It would be more helpful in my view to connect Dewey's discussion to ideas of second and third generation rights rather than to communitarianism (See Dewey, 1935/1987, 61).

Dewey's distinction between community and society suggests that he thinks that there exists a dynamic relation between the two forms of "associated" life. Democracy, since it illustrates the mutual dependence of citizens in public decision-making, is for Dewey an important link between community and society. In *Reconstruction in philosophy* e.g. he is quite concerned to show that democracy must not be limited to "a consecration of some form of government" but rather understood as "a name for the fact that human nature is developed only when its elements take part in directing things which are common" (Dewey, 1948, 209). He argues that democracy is a framework for any social and communal interaction, political as well as non-political and as a framework for group interaction including interaction between communities (Dewey, 1927/1984, 328). Dewey thus offers a richer picture of the interrelation between society and community than does Rawls.

There is no question that for Dewey community is a primary source of democratic value. "Only when we start from community, [. . .]" he argues, "can we reach an idea of democracy that is not utopian" (Dewey, 1927/1984, 329). From a Rawlsian point of view democracy must be a reasonable social arrangement rather than a community-based ideal since a "common aim of political justice must not be mistaken for [. . .] 'a conception of the good'" (Rawls, 1996, 146n). For Rawls personal conceptions of the good—including comprehensive doctrines—are community-related whereas political conceptions seek their justifications elsewhere. From a Deweyan perspective one would have to see a relation of interdependence between comprehensive doctrines and political conceptions. To hold a different view would be "utopian" in the sense of insisting on a social arrangement based on a too abstract conception of social life. The basic model of social life is community. It would therefore, pragmatically speaking, be unwise to bypass it in political theory.

Dewey always regarded himself as a liberal and his political writings in the interwar years show a strong commitment to defending liberal values against totalitarian ideologies, such as Nazism and Bolshevism. But Dewey's argument that liberal democracy was a stronger form of government than the dictatorships, which dominated Europe did not sound very convincing in the 1930's. This was a time when liberal policies appeared weak to radically-minded thinkers, and it was far from being a marginal opinion that liberal ideas would be pushed aside in a final battle between Fascism and Communism (Dewey, 1935/1987, 64, see also 1934/1986, 91–5). Dewey seems to recognize (he does not say so explicitly) how totalitarian regimes evade rather than face the real tasks in modern society. Dewey does not present an analysis, such as Hannah Arendt later did when she described totalitarian regimes as imposing ideology on reality to the point of denying "factuality"—creating a propaganda world where any reference to experience is meaningless (Arendt 1975, 458). But he also saw (this he expresses clearly in the final paragraphs of *Liberalism and Social Action*) that in the long run ideology would make these regimes weak: In the end that form of government is stronger which conforms to reality rather than the one that seeks to mold reality to fit ideology (See Dewey, 1935/1987, 65). Dewey's contemporary and historical outlook helps understand the deeper reasons that motivate his democratic ideal and the underlying idea of pluralism according to which the diversity of valuations broadens the cognitive base of democratic choice and thus feed into a liberal conception of democracy, rather than a communitarian notion of the good.

The conclusion here is that a Deweyan approach is much more inclusive than Rawls's. The reason in is simple. While Rawls is concerned to maintain a distinction between reasonable and unreasonable claims in public reason, Dewey is interested in making the full diversity of community value and cultural difference bear on democratic decision-making in a constructive way. His thinking therefore is closer to and more helpful for epistemic conceptions of democracy than the Rawlsian model. Yet as I will explain, I believe that Rawls's discussion of pluralism and comprehensive doctrines in the end proves helpful for acknowledging the strengths of the Deweyan approach.

4. Pluralism and the democratic ideal

The criticism of Deweyan democracy that originates in a Rawlsian perspective is, as I have argued, based on the claim that it is nothing more than a comprehensive doctrine: an inspired value commitment that may appeal to some but can never be sufficiently generalized to be taken seriously as a political conception (Talisse, 2003, 12). If this criticism holds, the commitment to democracy Dewey requires would imply abandoning pluralism, on the grounds that it ignores a vital distinction between doctrines that are rejectable and those that are not. There are two related reasons for opposing it: (1) The criticism does not properly take into account the difference between simple and reasonable pluralism, and therefore fails to properly recognize the importance of "considered value" (2) it is based on a simplified understanding of what constitutes a comprehensive doctrine. I will consider each in turn.

4.1 Dewey's pluralism and Rawls's

Dewey was a realist methodologically and practically: Problems that human beings face in everyday life—as individuals or collectives—are real, and the choice is to face them or avoid them. His main complaint about philosophers was that they show a tendency to stick to questions that have become irrelevant while avoiding real and pressing problems (Dewey, 1920/1982, 92–93). Dewey's pluralism plays an important role in enabling a full and comprehensive view of differences, problems and conflicts. By enlarging democracy's cognitive scope, pluralism strengthens democratic society in the long run while a totalitarian entity would be weakened with time by a decision-making process, which may be controlled more by propaganda than by actual experience (Bohman, 2010, 202; Dewey 1928/1984, 222, see also 249).

Dewey's pluralism is not the standard value pluralism as described by thinkers like Isaiah Berlin. Dewey makes a distinction between "impulsive" value and "considered" value. Impulsive value is personal and relative to various personal, cultural and emotional factors, while considered value has a cognitive component. It is based on thinking critically about the consequences of value ranking and may therefore lead to changes in valuation (See Dewey, 1930/1984, 281–2). Dewey points out that there must be a dynamic relationship between values and problems, i.e. that values affect what we see as problematic and vice versa, the problems we encounter affect our values. This suggests that value conflict is a certain

kind of discrepancy resulting from acknowledging the consequences of various possible courses of action and considering the unavoidable trade-offs. The relevant kind of value pluralism for Dewey is the pluralism of considered rather than impulsive value, which necessarily connects the choice of value to actual problems rather than simply insisting that the "good life" is in the end is a personal choice (See also Dewey & Tufts, 1932/1985, 176–8).

Value pluralism—the Rawlsian conception of "reasonable pluralism" could also be discussed in this context—is not the situation where different persons (or groups) hold different values and that's that. Rather, pluralism is an invitation to think about the world, or about experience, in different ways and from a variety of different perspectives on common problems. In this way pluralism increases the cognitive scope of democracy and is therefore an important feature of democracy, rather than a sad fact of modern life. One might of course ask whether difference is always good: Will all value difference increase cognitive ability in groups or only while it remains within certain limits? (Landemore, 2013, 192). The Deweyan answer to such a question should be to point to the problems rather than to difference in value. A collective dealing with a problem perceived as common will profit from using insights that different value commitments provide, no matter how different, as long as the collective is on the whole committed to respecting different values. The question of limits in other words becomes irrelevant.

In *Political Liberalism*, Rawls draws the distinction (mentioned above) between the "fact of pluralism" and the "fact of reasonable pluralism." The fact of pluralism is the situation in which individuals and groups—including communities—simply have values and beliefs. These may conflict but that should not interfere with the fair organization of society. The fact of reasonable pluralism, however, is "the fact that among the views that develop are a diversity of reasonable comprehensive doctrines" (Rawls, 1996, 36).

Reasonable pluralism is "not an unfortunate condition of human life [...] but the inevitable outcome of free human reason" (Rawls, 1996, 37). If pluralism makes it a challenge to achieve fairness in spite of difference, reasonable pluralism creates a rich context for "framing political conceptions" which need the support of reasonable comprehensive doctrines. Reasonable pluralism thus contributes to public reason.

The distinction between pluralism and reasonable pluralism is important for Rawls's theory. If pluralism begets comprehensive doctrines, they

can be all kinds of doctrines, values, religious beliefs etc. that may or may not be reasonable. Reasonable pluralism on the other hand begets reasonable doctrines, which does not mean that reasonable people may not choose to reject them, but at least makes it possible for them to be entertained, discussed and contested by those sharing a political society.

The difference here between Rawls's pluralism and Dewey's appears in the different roles of community. While it is vital for reasonable pluralism that reasonable views originate in a political environment that has cut its ties to community values and therefore arise in the space of political value, Dewey, as I argued before, is committed to a view of community as a source of value. Rawls's pluralism is therefore too abstract for Dewey, whereas Dewey's pluralism, from the Rawlsian point of view, does not allow for the distinction between reasonable pluralism and pluralism simpliciter.

Thus Rawls's theory depends on the ideal of society as a distinct entity where a particular kind of political discussion has replaced the noise and bargaining of communities. Value difference will also be seen as a good and a potential social strength, not as a simple fact making pluralism necessary as a "modus vivendi" (Rawls, 1996, 146–7). Dewey on the other hand is committed not to abandoning the community noise but rather upon finding ways to develop and transform it. Democracy, rather than just representing a way of decision-making proper for a society in which reflective equilibrium has more ore less been achieved, is a necessary channel of such transformation of community. The deliberation it promotes, the procedural techniques it offers and the problem-solving to which it commits those who participate, serve to legitimate and optimize common decisions. More simply the difference between Rawls and Dewey can be described as the difference between the thought experiment about the just society at the core of Rawls theory and the insistence of connecting with "genuine problems" so conspicuous in Dewey's theorizing (Dewey, 1917/1980, 4).

4.2 On Comprehensive doctrines

"Comprehensive doctrine" as mentioned earlier can be understood in two different ways as comprehensive doctrine simpliciter and as reasonable comprehensive doctrine. Rawls sometimes describes it as a private position, which reflects moral, religious or ideological belief, and therefore should not be a part of public reason—this is the first understanding, the

simpler one. If a political conception can be shown to be based on such a doctrine, that would be sufficient reason to put it aside and demand that political reasoning avoid it (Talisse, 2003, 6).

The characterization of reasonable comprehensive doctrine is more complex. If the first characterization depends on a dubious idea of there being certain basic political values that can somehow be regarded as "un-rejectable" in terms of reason, i.e. whose rejection would be unreasonable under all circumstances, the second characterization avoids such "articles of reason" altogether. There is no need for basic political values on that view and the presence of comprehensive doctrines as moral beliefs to which one may or may not adhere is simply taken for granted. Such doctrines are generally unhelpful in justifying political conceptions but may be very useful in creating such conceptions. Therefore they may well have a place in public reason, although a legitimate political argument cannot refer to them alone as justification.

The two views Rawls describes as exclusive and inclusive (Rawls, 1996, 247). On the second, inclusive, view of comprehensive doctrine the "un-rejectability" condition is irrelevant. No particular comprehensive doctrine is necessary to justify a political conception; political conceptions can therefore (and should) be discussed and evaluated without reference to particular comprehensive doctrines. On the inclusive understanding of comprehensive doctrine, however, there is no test to determine whether a view or an argument is a part of public reason or not and it does not follow that a conception of democracy philosophically connected to, or built into, some deeper insights in morals or metaphysics is thereby in op-position to pluralism. A political conception can be derived from a num-ber of different comprehensive doctrines, and therefore in discussing its strengths and merits and in presenting it in the political sphere no par-ticular underlying comprehensive doctrine can serve to explain or justify a political conception. An inclusive view of comprehensive doctrines has consequences for the problem of pluralism: The exclusive view makes pluralism problematic since it demands that comprehensive doctrines be abandoned. The inclusive view on the other hand allows that different comprehensive doctrines lead to different or similar political conceptions. If democracy as a way of life depends on the acceptance of a certain com-prehensive doctrine—on a substantive view of the moral life—it can only be made sense of from the point of view of the exclusive understanding.

One could see this as illustrating, as Stanley Fish e.g. has argued, that different values—whether religious, moral or ideological—do not as such

have any particular connection to common political conceptions (Fish, 2003, 389–90). They may in individual cases be causally connected to political conceptions: My moral beliefs may compel me to being attracted to conservative or nationalistic views, without necessitating either. The same moral beliefs might lead me to adopting firm liberal views. This rather obvious point suggests that drawing a distinction between shared values, i.e. values that cannot be reasonably rejected, and rejectable values is at least implausible. One should therefore not reject a proposal on the grounds that it is based on doctrines that can be reasonably rejected (See also MacGilvray, 2012, 54). To explore and discuss proposed political conceptions is partly to search for diverse supportive arguments. A view or conception that can only be supported by one kind of reasons will most probably fail to become a part of public reason, whereas a conception supported by different kinds of arguments and reasons may be more likely to succeed. When we think of democracy in the Deweyan sense as a way of life, we should be thinking about it as a framework of discussion and decision-making that profits from a diversity of views, values and doctrines.

This understanding of democracy allows for seeing it as an ideal without thereby being committed to any particular comprehensive doctrine. Moreover it will not depend on a conception of public reason which excludes from consideration views that are inspired by comprehensive doctrines, given at least that they can be discussed and evaluated independently of any particular comprehensive doctrine.

5. A democratic commitment

I have argued that Dewey's conception of democracy rests on the idea that diversity in knowledge and value characterizes contemporary society. I will now show how Deweyan democracy addresses some of the most important concerns about liberal pluralistic society. I argue that Deweyan democracy is a powerful moral and epistemic framework for public deliberation and choice.

Dewey's concern with democracy's moral dimensions, and his search for a more personally fulfilling content than the political conception alone allows for, may make Deweyan democracy appear to be an untenable position. But the worry, as I have tried to show, rests on an overly narrow interpretation of the role of comprehensive doctrines in public reason—to use the Rawlsian characterization of public reason. Dewey's concern is

with the "spirit" of democracy, rather than questions of procedural rules in a situation where being a citizen is to be a stakeholder. Democracy's moral and epistemic superiority has less to do with procedure than with common problem-solving that diversity of views and sensitivity to new information and experiences best help solve. The moral and epistemic aspects of Deweyan democracy create conditions for an understanding of pluralism that makes it possible to show how increased diversity of values and outlooks increases its cognitive scope and depth of reflection and therefore help problem-solving in the public realm, given that the collective dealing with such problems does see them as common and in need of collective solutions.

5.1 Diversity and decision-making

Deweyan democracy is often characterized as participatory democracy where citizens, not only elected officials, are involved in forming policy and making decisions. A democratic commitment is toward, on the one hand, influencing decision-making and, on the other, on contributing to problem solving. The problem-solving aspect of it implies the conviction (shared with epistemic democrats) that participation not only increases legitimacy of public decisions but may increase the quality of decision-making. The assumption is that broad participation and a diversity of views and backgrounds within a group deliberating about the common good will help in the task of identifying best solutions (Page, 2007, 345–7). Therefore Deweyan democracy must face questions similar to those raised by the epistemic approach: It is not obvious that all participation is desirable in a representative democracy where elected officials are committed to dealing with public issues in a focused and orderly manner. Why should one think that public participation improves decisions if this is the case? Public ignorance is also a problem since the general public is in many—or even most—cases not very well informed about policy issues (Fishkin, 2009, 59). It might be better not to involve the public rather than risk that a large number of ill-informed individuals make a decision that should rightly be entrusted to politicians who have studied the issues, or to specialists and professionals inside governmental administrations (See also Dewey, 1927/1984, 312). Moreover, the emphasis on participation raises questions about civic duties and the extent to which participation should be required rather than invited. Thus important opposition to Deweyan democracy is not only to be found among liberal

thinkers who emphasize value neutrality (such as Robert Talisse) but also from those who favor institutional approaches to policy, such as Jürgen Habermas whose discourse theory could also be discussed in this context. Habermas's emphasis on the public sphere focuses on the quality of public reason rather than participation as such (See e.g. Habermas, 1996, 274–6).

Dewey is, just like Rawls, interested in the deliberative rather than aggregative aspects of democracy and for that reason focuses not on measuring views or tapping public opinion but on communication, i.e. the communication between government and social groups as well as between groups (See e.g. Dewey, 1922/1983, 337–45).

Democracy is a way of forming, deliberating and molding views, rather than of aggregating them. Democracy would be meaningless if one should regard individual opinions as fixed before discussion. But Dewey is curiously uninterested in democratic procedure (See Westbrook, 2005, 187) although he has a lot to say about method of "social inquiry" (Dewey, 1927/1984, 351). He thus leaves it open how decisions are made and sometimes seems to treat such discussion as a part of the discussion about forms of government. The dismissive attitude to forms and procedures points away from institutionalization—an impression strengthened by Dewey's claim that "the clear consciousness of a communal life [. . .] constitutes the idea of democracy"—and towards *care* in his characterization of equality as "effective regard for whatever is distinctive and unique in each, irrespective of physical and psychological inequalities." His focus is on the necessary conditions for a "democratically organized public" and it seems that replacing habit with inquiry is the most important condition, although, as Dewey emphasizes, not sufficient to bring about genuine democracy. He does not try to spell out sufficient conditions (Dewey, 1927/1984, 328–30, 314).

5.2 Community, truth and fallibility

The choice of democracy on the individual level is in Dewey's view strongly connected to understanding the meaning and consequences of "combined action." In modern societies people find themselves under various different obligations of different kinds, which also move them to action for different reasons (Dewey, 1927/1984, 252). Combined action never requires that individuals abandon self-interest however, and it is "pure mythology" that they are primarily moved by "calculated regard for their own good." Combined action is the basis for understanding the

connection between private good and communal good (Dewey, 1927/1984, 330–1, 335–6).

The idea of democracy Dewey is advocating is certainly richer and more complex than standard normative conceptions of democracy, even when the emphasis is on its deliberative aspect. As a moral choice it involves more than a method of selection or priority ranking. The faith in democracy that Dewey advocates is a faith in the ability of the many to deal successfully with the common good, as well as faith in the ability of local publics to reasonably frame and deal with common concerns. The challenge of choosing democracy amounts to believing that in the long run it is a wise decision for the individual to trust in decision-making that he or she may only be able to influence very slightly rather than either not trusting in any system or insisting on some other form of decision-making. The democratic ideal requires not self-sacrifice for the common good, but a communal understanding of self-interest. As Dewey puts it in his *Ethics* "it is not too much to say that the democratic ideal poses, rather than solves, the great problem: How to harmonize the development of each individual with the maintenance of a social state in which the activities of one will contribute to the good of all the others" (Dewey, 1932/1985, 350).

The individual strength expressed by choosing democracy involves a leap of faith. A person who chooses democracy thereby commits to an arrangement where trust in the judgment of others is necessary. Moreover since democracy, as I argued before, is an attempt to have reality shape policy, rather than vice versa, this choice also implies a commitment to explore, search and investigate. Again one can see this commitment as an analogy to a commitment to scientific method: The scientist can certainly generate results more easily by being loose on method. But lack of method reduces the value of the results. The democratic choice is inspired by the understanding that experience can never be evaded in public choice, real problems must be dealt with.

It has been argued that Charles Peirce's notion of truth creates a connection between truth and inquiry, which is absent from the more traditional accounts of truth as correspondence or coherence. Peirce's notion is thus more apt to serve scientific inquiry. His non-foundationalist idea consists in thinking along the lines of seeing true belief as the best belief "were we to inquire as far as we could on the matter" (Misak, 2000, 49). "Best" here means of course best in the sense of most closely in accordance with experience. A true belief is the belief that withstands doubt, i.e. goes uncorrected, no matter how thoroughly examined or for how long inquiry continues.

"Truth" is perhaps superfluous here, but fallibility, revisability or cor-rigibility of results and decisions are central issues. The conception of actually aiming at the best result depends on responsiveness to experi-ence. The essence of the pragmatic approach is not to "seek truth" but rather to be open to experience and revisions of beliefs when such revi-sions are needed. To let oneself be influenced in that way is not to adopt a passive standing against the world but rather to seek the best way to face experience, relying on communal, diversified wisdom rather than on single-minded individual "knowledge".

Can democracy be empirically supported or refuted? One could argue that historical examples from recent decades at least suggest that democ-racy can lead to disasters, and that other forms of rule might be more likely to avert disasters. The Deweyan answer to that question is neces-sarily evasive. There are no sufficient conditions of democratic success, and a failure of democracy can only be responded to by more democracy (Dewey, 1927/1984, 327). No failure of some form of governing, or of a procedure, can create legitimate doubts about democracy itself or about the transformation of society into what Dewey calls "the great commu-nity" (Dewey, 1927/1984, 332–3). The great community realizes the ideal of "an organized, articulate Public" which one might understand as a vi-sion in which each citizen is not only a stakeholder but also actually an activist (Dewey, 1927/1984, 350). The great community and Rawls's "well ordered society" clearly share many features. Since Dewey however insists on common problem solving, and that means on inquiry, rather than com-mon value as the necessary basis of public reason, there is room for more diversity in the Deweyan model than in the Rawlsian. In his discussion of public reason, Rawls points out that the relation between comprehensive doctrines and political conceptions depends on the social environment. The less ordered a given society is, the more need to refer to and rely on comprehensive doctrines in social and political disputes. In the well-ordered society political conceptions will be developed enough, and have sufficient support to cover the range of disagreement between groups or parties. If a society is not well-ordered, each group's comprehensive doc-trines will surface in its argumentation, which thus may or may not violate public reason in the sense that one side will rely on beliefs that either are irrelevant or are unreasonable from the other group's perspective (Rawls, 1996, 250–1).

Dewey's vision of the great community is thus closely related to Rawls's well-ordered society where the democratic way of life has become

sufficiently entrenched to provide values and norms that are genuinely
shared and help dealing with social and political issues, making common
problem solving at least easier. Dewey's community vision also gives us
a new, pragmatic, perspective on political conceptions, where they are
subject to empirical testing. A political conception is simply a shared be-
lief about political arrangements that has been sufficiently discussed and
explored to be taken for granted. Of course such a belief may later be
revised or rejected, but the reasons for such revision or rejection will all
things considered be empirical.

Dewey's democratic ideal is in this sense a commitment to diversi-
ty—the belief that the common good is best promoted in an environment
that places no artificial restrictions on legitimate claims or arguments
for public reason. This can be described as a moral position, but it is
also, and no less, based on an epistemic argument. While the Rawlsian
model involves an attempt to achieve a certain purity of public delibera-
tion, Dewey's model seems to tolerate mess: Therefore Deweyan plural-
ism also tolerates not only reasonable difference but difference as such.
The remaining question is whether the kind of problem-solving we would
be interested in as a part of democratic practice is well served by this
outlook.

5.3 The epistemic view and doubts about democracy

Deweyan democracy, as I have argued, partly rests on the belief that
democracy is the framework of public choice most likely to promote the
common good and keep track of reality. Dewey's belief in democracy
differs from the acceptance of democracy as the only acceptable form of
public decision-making. One might point out that acceptance of democ-
racy rather than belief in democracy characterizes the dominating polit-
ical attitudes towards it in todays world. Discussion therefore is often
focused on eliminating perceived dangers of democracy such as dema-
goguery, vulgar populism, hijacking of special interest, lack of profes-
sionalism and rational ignorance among voters (Urbinati, 2014, 139–40).
Thinkers like Dewey, who emphasize the worth of the democratic ideal
as such, risk being put in the populist category and seen as promoters of
"the people's will" rather than responsible theorists of fairness and rea-
son. In Dewey's case the more difficult criticism concerns the nature of
his democratic ideal which for authors such as Robert Talisse is simply too

comprehensive, too linked to personal views and preferences to be really useful as a political conception.

There are many ways to put democracy in doubt. As Bo Rothstein has shown, the correlation between democracy and good life is not always in democracy's favor (Rothstein, 2013, 15). Many surveys show it to be negative over a range of accepted indicators measuring quality of life. Good governance seems, on the other hand, to be strongly correlated to success in improving the lives of citizens. Increased democracy may even lead to deterioration in governance. The alternative to democracy might thus be efficiency and justice in the design of institutions, as well as basic liberties that promote equality and individual freedom in accordance with liberal principles. It is clear in any case that if increased democracy is shown to go against improving the quality of life for citizens that indeed would deliver a strong argument against democracy.

I have argued that according to a Deweyan understanding democracy is not choosing a particular method or procedure for a specific kind of decision-making but rather a general framework for public choice and deliberation. Critics of Deweyan democracy will point out that this must be seen as a moral choice: The argument required would be to show the moral superiority of this choice, even in case democracy will not generally increase the quality of decision-making (increase the number of right decisions, decrease the number of wrong decisions). I want to finish this paper with an attempt to show that this is not Dewey's approach. His justification of democracy is epistemic rather than moral, and consequently the moral argument (if there is one) rests on the epistemic argument. So for Dewey democracy must in the long run, provide a better environment, better tools and on the whole better approaches to problem solving than other conceivable (or available) approaches. This does not mean of course that one must show that in any single case democratic choice is better than an undemocratic choice in making decisions, but it must imply that democracy's long term power to bend decision-making towards right decisions rather than wrong is essential for its justification.

In *The Public and its Problems* Dewey argues that to develop democracy is to perfect "the means and ways of communication of meanings so that genuinely shared interest in the consequences of interdependent activities may inform desire and effort and thereby direct action" this Dewey points out, is certainly a moral problem but "dependent upon intelligence and education" (Dewey, 1927/1984, 349). In other words, to engage in democracy is to take seriously a commitment to seek not only solutions that can

be had by majority decision or solutions that can be forged by bargaining or by negotiation and compromise but to seek the best solutions. If "real" democracy often (even most of the time) falls short of this democratic ideal that does not make this idea of democracy any less clear. It just articulates the need for continuous criticism as a part of democracy.

5.4 Experimentation

The problem Dewey focuses on in *The Public and its Problems* is how to discover "the means by which a scattered, mobile and manifold public may so recognize itself as to define and express its interests" (Dewey, 1927/1984, 327). This is in his view an "intellectual" problem since it is essentially a search for necessary conditions. The "manifold public" on becoming able to think together in this sense, can create a space between the inevitable ("economic facts" e.g.) and the possible transformation and direction of "industry and its eventual consequences" (Dewey, 1927/1984, 349–50; see also 313–4). The choice made by the public is better than decisions by experts if information and communication allow for the recognition of common goals because the expert is non-political and therefore has a tendency to ignore or at least not recognize the ways in which such transformation and direction may be influenced (See Dewey, 1927/1984, 316). Only the public can, under the right circumstances, identify and choose the best solutions, i.e. "an organized, articulate public." This raises the question of how these circumstances or conditions are best described, i.e. of how the public's cognitive abilities can be exercised rather than abused.

Although I seek in this paper rather to show that the basis for Deweyan democracy is epistemic than to claim that this kind of a defense of democracy is successful, a few things should be said about what could count as ideal democratic circumstances on this Deweyan view. First, since democracy is based on non-routine ways of dealing with problems, similar to what we would expect from research or scientific thinking, situations of social upheaval or discontent may provide, support democracy rather than vice versa. In Rawls's theory that would not be the case, since the ideal thinking situation is where overlapping consensus has created a space of reflective equilibrium. The ideal circumstances for healthy democratic choice will therefore be associated with highly organized environment, social unrest will be seen as essentially creating threats to democracy.

The Deweyan emphasis on exploration and experimentation also distinguishes this approach from political theorists such as Rawls and Habermas and, to some extent, makes it unique (See Dewey, 1927/1984, 343). The idea that democracy is the common search for the best solutions is a vague description, but correct in the sense that the question of how to organize democratic processes should be built on this idea. Therefore the Deweyan view of administration and administrative practice must be understood accordingly. In his political activism Dewey was a great promoter of projects where policy-making and even decision-making was entrusted to non-governmental associations, or in some way brought out of the traditional environment of public administration serving representational bodies of elected officials. This should not be seen as an attempt to subvert or oppose representational democracy, and Dewey was certainly no anarchist. But he did understand the value of making policy- and decision-making more diverse by creating methods to bring the public into it on higher and lower levels, in creating a public sphere as well as in instructing politicians in particular concrete cases.

6. Conclusion

My aim in this paper was to show that Deweyan democracy is not a vague idealist position demanding a particular moral commitment from every citizen and therefore a view of "human nature and flourishing" (Talisse, 2003, 13). Rather I argued that it is an attempt to construct a more complex picture of democracy as way to seek best solutions, where pluralism and diversity of doctrines is essential for creating a broad cognitive scope for democratic inquiry and to harness the epistemic power of the public. I hope I have succeeded in doing so. I have not tried however to show that Dewey's attempt is, in the end, successful, although my suggestion is that it is. But it requires a separate discussion.[1]

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