A Democratic Ideal for Troubled Times: John Dewey, Civic Action, and Peaceful Conflict Resolution

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Abstract

In an era defined by events that continuously shake Fukuyama's thesis according to which liberal democracy constitutes the end of History, there is need for a democratic ideal that puts the role of civic action at the heart of its justification. In this article, I argue that John Dewey's democratic ideal understood as a matter of civic co-creation, where democratic pursuits are continually redefined by citizens through solving communal problems - not set by history, once and for all - provides a valuable response to this need. To this end, this article reconsiders Deweyan democracy by:(1) presenting it as a transformational process, in opposition to liberal democracy; (2) discussing Dewey's conception of active citizenship as requiring

more than mere political participation; (3) articulating Dewey's democratic ideal as a form of applied social intelligence; (4) making explicit the pedagogical consequences of Deweyan democracy; and (5) interpreting it as a form of peaceful conflict resolution aiming at balance in inter-personal relationships.
Keywords: John Dewey, Fukuyama, Liberal Democracy, Collective Problem, Peaceful Conflict Resolution.

Introduction

> "We were recently entertained by a naïve fable of the happy arrival of the end of history, of the overflowing triumph of an all-democratic bliss; the ultimate global arrangement had supposedly been attained. But we all see and sense that something very different is coming, something new, and perhaps quite stern. No, tranquillity does not promise to descend on our planet, and will not be granted us so easily." (Alexander Solzhenitsyn, as cited in Brown, 2008)

As soon as the National Interest published Francis Fukuyama's (1989) "The End of History?" there were doubts as to the soundness of its over-arching argument (see for example, Bloom, Hassner, Himmelfarb, Kristol, Moynihan and Sestanovich, 1989, Huntington, 1989; Wieseltier, 1989). This argument, further developed in his book *The End of History and the Last Man* (Fukuyama, 1992), sought to demonstrate that liberal democracy is the terminus of human history. In arguing for this, Fukuyama drew on Alexander Kojève's rather sanguinary interpretation of Hegel to argue that history is directional, advancing through stages spurred on by violent

revolutions which come about when the contradiction implicit in a particular historical stage become explicit.[1] This is a teleological conception of history - that is to say, history proceeds towards a pre-given finality, a telos (Hegel, 2001). Indeed, Fukuyama's main contention is that liberal democracy constitutes this telos. Therefore, in his view, liberal democracy is the "final form of human government" (Fukuyama, 1992, p.xi). Fukuyama provides two types of arguments in favour of this conclusion: the first is empirical, while the second is theoretical. The empirical argument can be summed up in the following statement:

> "…a remarkable consensus concerning the legitimacy of liberal democracy as a system of government ha(s) emerged throughout the world over the past few years, as it ha(s) conquered rival ideologies like hereditary monarchy, fascism, and most recently communism." (Fukuyama, 1992, p.xi)

The reason for the growth and durability of this consensus, according to Fukuyama, is wealth creating superiority of liberal capitalist democracy: private property and the protection of liberal rights are supposed to yield unparalleled wealth and peace to all peoples willing to shape their polities around them. So far, so simple. The theoretical argument, however, is more complex.

Returning to Hegel, Fukuyama draws on the master-slave dialectic to outline a certain conception of human motivation. In his account, in addition to the satisfaction of needs and desires, human

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[1] On Kojeve's sanguinary reading of Hegel, Descombes (1981, p.13) writes: "[Kojeve's] commentary on The Phenomenology of Mind presents it as an account of universal history in which bloody strife – and not reason—is responsible for the progress of events towards the happy conclusion."

beings strive for recognition from other humans. The part of the self that strives for recognition, Fukuyama contends, corresponds to what Plato called *'thymos'* (θυμός). *Thymos*, according to Plato (1987; 2005), supplements the appetitive and rational parts of the human soul with a third part of the psyche that strives uniquely for recognition. On Fukuyama's re-reading of Hegel's master-slave dialectic, it is this part of the self that motivates human beings to confront each other in mortal battles "to make the other 'recognize' their humaneness" (Fukuyama, 1992, p.xvi). It was thus, metaphorically, in these battles for nothing more than "pure prestige", where the outcome demanded that one of the combatants die or surrender, that the original division of human society into two classes began: "a class of masters who were willing to risk their lives, and a class of slaves, who gave in to their natural fear of death" (Fukuyama, 1992, p.xvii).

Still, the net result of these battles is universal dissatisfaction: on the one hand, the slaves are denied recognition (that is, they are not recognised as human beings possessing worth and dignity) and forced to recognise their masters; on the other hand, the masters are left less-than-satisfied by the recognition offered to them by their slaves, since it is not given freely by human beings possessing worth and dignity. On this Hegelian view, the striving for recognition can only be fully satisfied if another human being gives it freely. Thus, by making a slave out of another human being, the master deprives himself of the possibility of being fully recognised by that human being, for in the eyes of the master the slave is then but "a *thing*, a tool for the satisfaction of the master's wants" (Fukuyama, 1992, p. 194). This is the contradiction inherent in aristocratic societies supposedly overcome by bourgeois liberal revolutions. The new social organisation that ensues offers "universal and reciprocal

recognition, where every citizen recognizes the dignity and humanity of every other citizen, and where that dignity is recognized in turn by the state through the granting of *rights*." (Fukuyama, 1992, p.xviii - emphasis in original). According to Fukuyama, once we accept that striving for recognition is the mechanism driving history, it follows that the advent of a political regime in which mutual recognition is enshrined into the political and legal structures of society, through the granting of universal rights, constitutes the end of history. Such a regime, he claimed, is none other than what we presently call 'liberal democracy'.

There are plenty of good reasons to call Fukuyama's original argument into question. On empirical grounds, democracy and liberalism no longer seem to be in the ascent: inequality and economic stagnation in advanced liberal democracies have eroded the sense of political legitimacy (Badiou, 2012; Milne 2012; Dorling, 2014) [2] and led to a renewal of nationalism (Chwalisz, 2015; Adler, 2016; Zatat, 2016; Stark 2016);China has demonstrated that wealth creation can be decoupled from liberal democracy (Handelman, 1993; Tsai, 2007; Chen, 2013); Russian foreign policy suggest a return to Cold War-like relations with the West (Sakwa, 2008; Lucas, 2009; Kandiyoti, 2015, pp. 138-152); and ISIS/Daesh hopes to constitute a veritable civilisational challenger (Chulov, 2015; Black, 2015, pp. 217-220). On theoretical grounds, historical determinism seems: (i) epistemically naïve, because it is far from obvious that our best epistemic practices can yield much support for any such grand predictions about the political future of humanity (Popper, 2002; Putnam, 1981); (ii) morally objectionable, because it takes the West to be the model of

[2] Also, Fukuyama (2012) himself raises this concern.

civilisational development for the entire world without so much as a passing admission that much of the West's development is owed to the systematic expropriation of formerly colonised peoples across the world (Hobson, 2004; 2012); and (iii) politically dangerous, because it invites democratic quiescence by suggesting that the biggest political question of all, that of the nature of the regime in which we ought to live, is already a settled matter, something for which there is no further need to imagine, work, and struggle - it invites the view that we may rest on our political laurels whilst history does the work for us (Rorty, 1998).

While all of these lines of criticism potentially provide good reasons to re-evaluate Fukuyama's thesis, it is the political criticism which should concern us most at this point in time. Not only is liberal democracy going through a period of precarious uncertainty (Hay and Payne, 2013), but it is also struggling to even attempt to meet its most basic promise to defend democracy and to expand the reach of human rights (see for example, Coggan, 2013). In this era of chronic uncertainty, it all too often appears as though protecting the good functioning of global capitalism is more important to liberal democracies than respecting the democratic will of their peoples (Bauman, 2000), or providing the political and material means to international authorities to engage in effective peace-keeping missions to protect civilian populations and uphold human rights in any systematic sense (as is perhaps demonstrated nowhere more starkly than in Syria).

Amidst this wobbling, there are opportunities as well as risks. One such opportunity consists in developing a richer meaning of 'democracy' than mere rule by elected elites mixed with broadly

tolerant capitalism. It is to this end that, in this article, I reconsider John Dewey's democratic ideal understood as a matter of civic co-creation, where democratic pursuits are continually redefined by citizens through the process co-creating one's communal life - not set by history, once and for all. First, I start by presenting Deweyan democracy as a transformational process in opposition to liberal democracy. Second, I discuss Dewey's conception of active citizenship as requiring more than mere political participation. Third, I articulate Dewey's democratic ideal as a form of applied social intelligence. Fourth, I make explicit the pedagogical consequences of Deweyan democracy. Finally, I interpret this democratic ideal as a form of peaceful conflict resolution aiming at balance in inter-personal relationships

1. Democracy as a Transformational Process

> "There is more than a verbal tie between the words common, community, and communication. Men live in a community in virtue of the things which they have in common; and communication is the way in which they come to possess things in common. What they must have in common in order to form a community or society are aims, beliefs, aspirations, knowledge - a common understanding - like-mindedness as the sociologists say." (Dewey, *MW* 9; p. 7)

Classical liberals held an essentially atomistic conception of human nature: in their view, individuals are not bound by force of nature in political communities but by contractual agreement

reached for the sake of mutual gain. Human nature, in this account, is fundamentally asocial; Dewey cites John Stuart Mill's *Logic* as claiming that "human beings in society have no properties but those which are derived from and may be resolved into the laws of nature of individual man" (Dewey, *LW* 13, p. 138). Classical liberalism's conception of individual human nature is thus central to its wider philosophical edifice. Most obviously, it led classical liberals to advocate a conception of democracy - commonly referred to as 'liberal democracy' - inextricably linked to laissez faire policies (i.e. the minimal involvement of the state in economic matters) and a representative majoritarian representative mode of government (Dewey, *LW* 13, p. 137). Thus, according to their account, democracy is essentially a political arrangement that enables the aggregation of fixed individual interests - with each individual counting for one and no more than one - such as to yield majorities. These majorities are understood to confer political legitimacy upon policies, so long as these do not contravene the constitutional principles upon which liberal democracy ultimately rests. Consequently, in their view, democracy is chiefly of instrumental value since it is necessary for the resolution of inter-personal disputes without encroaching upon the rights of individuals (de Ruggiero, 1927, pp. 370-80).

In response, Dewey rejects the classical liberal notion of human nature. For him, the self is inevitably social, not atomistically self-sustaining: the individual only develops a truly individual identity by taking part in social relations that offer her recognition as a socially valuable member of her community; in doing so, she sustains communal practices and thus takes part in the manifestation of her community itself. He thus sees the individual and her community as mutually constitutive - "'we' is as inevitable as 'I'" (Dewey, *LW* 2,

p. 330). In other words, "society, as a real whole, is the normal order, and the mass as aggregate of isolated units is the fiction" (Dewey, *EW* 1, p. 232).

This leads Dewey to develop an associative and transformational conception of democracy. Since, in his view, the individual evolves through the co-constitutive dialogic relationship she entertains with her community, her interests and her values are also the product of this kind of relationship. According to Dewey, the moral bedrock or the deeper "meaning of democracy (…) was expressed by Abraham Lincoln when he said that no man was good enough or wise enough to govern others without their consent; that is, without some expression on their part of their own needs, their own desires and their own conception of how social affairs should go on and social problems handled" (Dewey, *LW* 13, p. 295). The act of voting for representatives and in occasional referenda offered by liberal democracy goes some way towards expressing this meaning, for Dewey: it gives a voice to people at specific times to influence the direction of the polis. However, in the fullest expression of its meaning, democracy gives to citizens not merely the right to vote, but the responsibility to consider "what it is that we as individuals want, what our needs and troubles are" (Dewey, *LW* 13, p. 295). Democracy thus means bestowing upon citizens the capacity and the responsibility to engage with others in the task of living lives of mutual interest. According to Dewey, this is best furthered by the act of engaging in collective problem solving.

Since the citizen, her interests, and her values are fundamentally shaped by her interactions with her community, the interactions she will entertain with others during the process of collective decision-

making have the potential to transform her values, her interests, and her identity. For Dewey, this potential for transformation is the truest expression of the spirit of democracy. As a result, democracy does not merely enable the tallying up of pre-given preferences; it enables these preferences to be transformed by engaging in "mutual conference and mutual consultation and arriving ultimately at social control by pooling, by putting together all of these individual expressions of ideas and wants" (Dewey, *LW* 13, p. 295). Democracy thus crucially yields the prospect of personal and social transformation through interaction with others. That is why Dewey rejects the classical liberal reduction of democracy to a game of numbers: for him, democracy is not primarily a method for aggregating the diverse interests of individuals while respecting the rights of individuals, rather it is a method for harmonising relations between diverse people and communities by transforming the self-conceptions, values, and interests of citizens.

For this to take place, citizens must be actively involved in associative living. Dewey explains that true democracy requires community. He specifies:

> 'Wherever there is a conjoint activity whose consequences are appreciated as goods by all singular persons who take part in it, and where the realization of the good is such as to effect an energetic desire and effort to sustain it in being just because it is a good shared by all, there is in so far a community' (Dewey, *LW* 2, p. 328).

In practice, this shared activity can be as simple as "taking part in a game, in conversation, in a drama, in family life" (Dewey, *LW* 7, p. 345), but such communicative activities must be related,

in some way, to the needs and concerns of the community. Dewey contends that "[a]ssociated or joint activity is a condition of the creation of a community" (*LW* 2, p. 330). The goal is thus to construct a community by engaging in collective problem solving. Citizens are to join forces and take part in common endeavours. Through these common endeavours, common values are fostered. With these common values binding individuals across social and cultural lines, a democratic society can hope to foster the spirit of a true and genuine community. Democracy thus enables the transformation of "physical interdependence into moral - into human - interdependence" (Dewey, *LW* 13, p. 180).

This emphasis on seeking common values may lead the astute critic to fear that Dewey's democratic ideal calls for a dangerous level of homogeneity at the expense of diversity. But that is the opposite of what is intended. Dewey (*MW* 10, p. 288)writes:

> 'The concept of uniformity and unanimity in culture is rather repellent […] Variety is the spice of life, and the richness and the attractiveness of social institutions de pend upon cultural diversity among separate units. In so far as people are all alike, there is no give and take among them. And it is better to give and take.'

In the last instance, "the greatest experiment in humanity" crucially involves "living together in ways in which the life of each of us is at once profitable in the deepest sense of the word, profitable to himself and helpful in the building up of the individuality of others" (Dewey, *LW* 13, p. 303). This presupposes a certain conception of

equality among members of the community "which recognizes both interdependence and the individuality of each" (Festenstein 1997, p. 90). As Dewey (*LW* 2, p. 329) remarks:

> 'Equality denotes the unhampered share which each indi vidual member of the community has in the consequences of associated action. It is equitable because it is meas ured only by need and capacity to utilize, not by extrane ous factors which deprive one in order that another may take and have. A baby in a family is equal with others, not because of some antecedent and structural quality which is the same as that of others, but in so far as his needs for care and development are attended to without being sac-rificed to the superior strength, possessions and matured abilities of others.'

Community thus presupposes a conception of equality which, he continues, "denotes effective regard for whatever is distinctive and unique in each, irrespective of physical and psychological inequalities" (Dewey, *LW* 2, p. 329-30). From the perspective of society, equality is "the form of society in which every man has a chance and knows that he has it - and we may add, a chance to which no possible limits can be put, a chance which is truly infinite, the chance to become a person" (Dewey, *EW* 1, p. 63). This balance between self and community is the goal of democracy. Crucially, for Dewey, this balance cannot be resolved in abstraction. It must be resolved through actual community building as a result of collective deliberation, for it is in this task that radical personal and social transformation is enabled.

2. Active Citizenship: Political Participation and Beyond

In the political realm, Dewey does not advocate a return to Athenian-style direct democracy. He fully recognises the need for public representation and for sophisticated expertise in the contemporary context. Yet, he also thinks that the public at large should be more deeply involved in the deliberations of the community. These views are consistent because Dewey thinks democratic deliberation is something that happens throughout society, not just in political assemblies (Dewey, *LW* 2, p. 325 & *LW* 11, p. 25). Festenstein (1997, p. 95) explains, "Dewey attaches no particular value to political participation: his ideal of associated living aims to outline principles constitutive of social life as such, and not principles which define the political sphere." We should therefore understand Dewey as seeking to make sense of the place and promise of active citizenship in a more general sense than strictly political participation when he writes:

> 'From the standpoint of the individual, [democracy] consists in having a responsible share according to capacity in forming and directing activities of the groups to which one belongs and in participating according to need in the values which the groups sustain. From the standpoint of the groups, it demands liberation of the potentialities of the members of a group in harmony with the interests and goods which are common. Since every individual is a member of many groups, this specification cannot be fulfilled except when different groups interact flexibly and fully in connection with other groups.' (Dewey, *LW* 2, pp. 327-328)

To explain Dewey's point further: from the perspective of the individual, democracy consists of receiving the necessary support and challenge to enable the development of responsible choice, thus securing a life of genuine freedom (or autonomy); from the perspective of the group, social conditions must be such as to enable the freedom (or autonomy) of all to effectively co-exist by fostering a spirit of community-mindedness. Thus, to put these together, democracy, for Dewey, is a form of collective deliberation, where free citizens engage with each other in conversation within and across social groups (such as, families, businesses, workers' unions, schools, housing associations, religious communities, etc.) in pursuit of common goals. Crucially, he recognises that the democratic functioning of these groups is only generated and sustained by communally minded citizens.

This, for Dewey, also applies to the democratic state itself: the development of democratic citizens is necessary for a truly democratic functioning of the state. Boisvert (1998, p.79) notes:

> "For a state to possess at least the formal requirements of democratic excellence (…) citizens must have a sense of being participants in the community's life. The public must be so organized that it can have a real impact on guiding public policy [and] the officials chosen to lead […] must be sensitive to multiple social consequences, not merely whether narrow, sought-after ends will result."

Therefore, if for classical liberals democracy is essentially a mode of government that respects the pre-given rights of individuals, then for Dewey democracy is defined by its capacity to generate

free citizens who have not only the right, but also the disposition to responsibly and meaningfully dissent from and renegotiate any unacceptable terms of community living.[3] Thus, the key feature of democracy is the social and moral fabric of the community as it is brought to life by the problem solving efforts of citizens in pursuit of common goals (minimally, the goal of living as part of a common polity). This notion of democracy thus frees individuals by developing their capacities to responsibly contribute to the life of the community and thus developing a deeper notion of their own individuality (that is, the compound of their relatedness to and separateness from others). This dialectical relationship between self and others, according to Dewey, is what ultimately enables the development of a sustainable community. Therefore, democracy's transformational character lies in mitigating, resolving and co-creating solutions to the problems, challenges, and conflicts that define our inter-personal lives.

3. Applied Social Intelligence

> "The clear consciousness of a communal life, in all its implications, constitutes the idea of democracy." (Dewey, *LW* 2, p. 328)

Dewey defends equality, freedom, diversity, and the value of open communicative conflict because he seeks to offer a truly

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[3] This can be read as an adaptation of the Euthyphro dilemma, replacing the task of defining 'holiness' with that of defining 'democracy':
- For classical liberals, 'democracy' is defined by the existence of democratic institutions that respect the pre-given nature of individuals;
- For Dewey,'democracy' is defined by the existence of democratic citizens who shape institutions such as to preserve the existence of democratic citizens.

Thanks to Christopher Hookway for pointing this out.

effective method for peaceful living. This method requires self-aware, equal, open, and honest discussion among all parties. For Dewey, self-awareness, in both the personal and collective senses, enables free choice. Yet, self-awareness is necessarily produced by friction. The self only becomes aware of itself as 'self' in the unfolding drama of encountering a challenging world to survive in. The same goes for communities. A community only comes to understand itself as a community as a result of experiencing the strain of concrete limitations, for it is this strain that calls forth the necessity of choice. In the face of problems, we are not only deciding what to do, we are also resolving upon the moral character of our community.

Conscious choice, for Dewey, enables intelligent self-definition. But conscious choice only emerges as a result of confrontation with limitation and resistance. This is because, in Dewey's pragmatist account of decision-making, humans pre-reflectively operate on the basis of habits of action and dispositions until they experience a disrupting experience. In his view, it is only when an event disrupts the flow of pre-reflective activity (Dewey, *LW* 12, p. 11) that humans truly engage in meaningful deliberation. Thus, meaningful thinking emerges as a result of encountering resistance. Dewey (*LW* 12, p. 111) explains:

> 'Organic interaction becomes inquiry whenexistential consequences are anticipated; when environing con ditions are examined with reference to their potentialities; and when responsive activities are selected and ordered with reference to actualization of some of the potentialities, rather than others, in a final existential situation. Resolution of the indeterminate situation is active and operational.

> If the inquiry is adequately directed, the final issue is the unified situation.'

Moreover, Dewey envisions problem solving as taking two potential forms: either (a) our thinking enables us to find a way to overcome or obliterate an obstacle before us, enabling us to return to our previously enjoyed end-in-sight thanks to the establishment of a new habit of action; or (b) our deliberation leads us to abandon the pursuit of the end-in-sight that can no longer be achieved because of the obstacle, establishing a new end-in-sight and a new associated habit of action. In fact, for Dewey, options (a) and (b) are not mutually exclusive; they operate in constant dialogue (*LW* 12, pp. 108-118). In the face of many problems, we revise our ends-in-sight without entirely abandoning our previously held ones. This enables creative adjustments that are successful in so far as they enable the return to a comfortable state of routine-like functioning.

The essence of Deweyan democracy is thus the application of this process to collective problems. According to Dewey, members of the public ought to be involved in tasks of collective inquiry to enable the renegotiation of communal ends and means. This is where the superiority of Deweyan democracy in relation to liberal democracy comes to the fore: liberal democracy assumes that citizens merely pursue pre-selected and unchanging ends and that resolution of collective problems is only arrived at as a result of a numerical *rapport de force*; whereas Deweyan democracy takes seriously the human capacity to revise ends and means, thus operating an inner-transformation and a redefinition of our self-conceptions, habits, and goals in light of those we encounter in others. Dewey's democratic ideal thus seeks to bring intelligence and choice to bear not upon the

satisfaction of predetermined desires, but upon the self-conceptions we adopt and the desires we chose to act upon in the face of limitation, challenge, and disagreement. Deweyan democracy is thus a method for fostering growth, social peace, and a deeper sense of community. To embrace this method means for citizens to seek to develop the capacities and the dispositions that will enable such sophisticated social interactions. This is a task to be furthered throughout all of life. But it is education that is called upon to be "the fundamental method of social progress and reform" (Dewey, *EW* 5, p. 93).

4. Democratic Citizenship as an Educational Achievement

> "Democracy has to be born anew every generation, and education is its midwife. Moreover, it is only education which can guarantee widespread community of interest and aim. In a complex society, ability to understand and sympathize with the operations and lot of others is a condition of common purpose which only education can procure. The external differences of pursuit and experience are so very great in our complicated industrial civilization, that men will not see across and through the walls which separate them, unless they have been trained to do so." (*MW* 10, 139)

It should be clear by now that Dewey's democratic ideal is more explicitly about the habits and dispositions of citizens than it is about the specific structures of political and social institutions. Thus, for Dewey, the democratic nature of society crucially hinges on the

sustained presence of caring, intelligent, and active problem solving citizens. This means that if we adopt a Deweyan understanding of democracy, we should primarily aim for the development of citizens with sophisticated intellectual and moral capacities, enabling them to intelligently and responsibly respond to the full complexity of the life-world in which they participate. Admittedly, the overwhelming majority of humans who have graced this earth with their presence fall far short of this ideal. Education, on the Deweyan picture, is the principal means at our disposal to seek to remedy that. Dewey (*EW* 5, p. 93) remarks "that education is the fundamental method of s ocial progress and reform" and that "in a complex society, ability to understand and sympathize with the operations and lot of others is a condition of common purpose which only education can procure. The external differences of pursuit and experience are so very great in our complicated industrial civilization, that men will not see across and through the walls which separate them, unless they have been trained to do so" (Dewey, *MW* 10, p. 139).

Therefore, for Dewey, the purpose of education is neither the accumulation of facts in the minds of the ignorant, nor the bestowing of skills in the metaphorical tool-boxes of the as-yet-untalented (Dewey, *MW* 9, pp. 1-375). Rather, the purpose of education is the development of habits of thought and action in young members of the community, such that they be prepared for collective problem solving, or, more poetically, for continuously co-creating the communities in which they live. Matthew Lipman explains the resultant pedagogical goal of the teacher as the creation and maintenance of a "community of inquiry" where discussions lead to thinking 'caringly', 'creatively', 'collectively', and 'critically' about the issues at hand (Lipman, 2003).

From the perspective of the child, "education means the creation of a discriminating mind, a mind that prefers not to dupe itself or to be the dupe of others", and the transitional goal is thus to "cultivate the habit of suspended judgement, of scepticism, of desire for evidence, of appeal to observation rather than sentiment, discussion rather than bias, inquiry rather than conventional idealizations" (Dewey, *MW* 13, p. 334). From the perspective of the community, "education should create an interest in all persons in furthering the general good, so that they will find their own happiness realized in what they can do to improve the conditions of others" (Dewey, *LW* 7, p. 243). Bringing the two perspectives together, the goal of a truly democratic education is the creation of "a desire for continued growth [by supplying the] means for making the desire effective in fact" (Dewey, *MW* 9, p. 58). Crucially, for Dewey, we learn best by doing. Preferring experiential and interactive forms of learning to passive and abstract learning, Dewey argues that civic education is best done by actually participating in civic practices. That is to say that learning ought to be inquiry-based, social in nature, and democratic in method, for this would constitute participating in action-oriented democratic inquiries.

However, it is worth pointing out that Dewey's faith in education is not without limits. He understands and accepts that education alone is not capable of generating a truly democratic society. He remarks: "Social institutions, the trend of occupations, the pattern of social arrangements, are the final controlling influences in shaping minds" (Dewey, *LW* 5, p. 102). That is why Dewey suggests that the democratisation of industrial relations would have a profoundly transformational effect upon our societies. Yet, he believes that changes of this grander type will only come about when

citizens actually have the intellectual and moral capacity to critically assess the wider social context in which they operate. Thus, "while the school is not a sufficient condition, it is a necessary condition of forming the understanding and the dispositions that are required to maintain a genuinely changed social order" (Dewey, *LW* 11, p. 414).

Therefore, a democratic education, for Dewey, is both required by and requires actually participating in democratic activities. In other words, democracy requires concrete actualisation through the pursuit of common projects. This democratic actualisation is at its root performed by individuals-already-in-relationships-with-significant-others engaged in collective pursuits, involved in the task of solving communal problems. Deweyan democracy calls upon the character of those relationships to be ever more thoroughly democratised, for the sake of intelligently co-creating one's social world. Accordingly, relationships ought to be made as free from oppressive practices and arbitrary power-relations as possible and oriented towards the collectively willed mutual liberation of all. Ultimately, Deweyan democracy calls for society to be rendered more democratic in all spheres of human relationships: from the ordinary relations of men and women and children within families and the school, to larger groups and communities, and eventually the state. In this sense, Deweyan democracy envisions agency for democratic change as pervading every level of society. Despite the fact that Dewey focuses most on the psychological and cultural level, no one level is given absolute priority. Experimentation in the concrete is required to determine which methods are most effective at each level of society. Thus, Deweyan democracy has aHegelian circular structure: it is "the process of its own becoming, the circle that presupposes

its end as its goal, having its end also as its beginning; and only by being worked out to its end, is it actual" (Hegel, 1977, p. 10). This very process, however, is in the final analysis best understood as a form of peaceful conflict resolution.

5. Peaceful Conflict Resolution: the Pursuit of Dynamic Balance in Inter-Personal Relationships

> "In the career of any impulse activity there are speaking generally three possibilities. It may find a surging, explosive discharge - blind, unintelligent. It may be sublimated - that is, become a factor coordinated intelligently with others in a continuing course of action. Thus a gust of anger may, because of its dynamic incorporation into disposition, be converted into an abiding conviction of social injustice to be remedied, and furnish the dynamic to carry the conviction into execution. Or an excitation of sexual attraction may reappear in art or in tranquil domestic attachments and services. Such an outcome represents the normal or desirable functioning of impulse; in which, to use our previous language, the impulse operates as a pivot, or reorganization of habit. Or again a released impulsive activity may be neither immediately expressed in isolated spasmodic action, nor indirectly employed in an enduring interest. It may be 'suppressed'.

> Suppression is not annihilation. 'Psychic' energy is no more capable of being abolished than the forms we recognize as physical. If it is neither exploded nor converted, it is turned inwards, to lead a surreptitious, subterranean life. An isolated or spasmodic manifestation is a sign of immaturity, crudity, savagery; a suppressed activity is the cause of all kinds of intellectual and moral pathology. One form of the resulting pathology constitutes 'reaction' in the sense in which the historian speaks of reactions. A conventionally familiar instance is Stuart license after Puritan restraint. A striking modern instance is the orgy of extravagance following upon the enforced economies and hardships of war, the moral let-down after its highstrung exalted idealisms, the deliberate carelessness after an attention too intense and too narrow. Outward manifestation of many normal activities had been suppressed. But activities were not suppressed. They were merely dammed up awaiting their chance" (Dewey, *MW* 14, pp. 108-109).

If we take the aspects of Deweyan democracy discussed so far and put them together, we arrive at a distinctive picture of human relationships. Indeed, I contend that it offers an ideal of inter-personal relationship, aiming for the concrete liberation of all constitutive members of the relationship, while seeking to secure the conditions that enable the continuance of the relationship itself. This ideal is therefore best described as a dynamic process that attempts to balance two fundamentally conflicting demands: the demand for independence on behalf of each party, and the communal demand for relatedness. Deweyan democracy succeeds in generating growth

"when a temporary falling out is a transition to a more extensive balance of the energies of the organism with those of the conditions under which it lives" (Dewey, *MW* 14, p.146). Thus, this task of striking a balance in the face of tension and conflict is, I think, the underlying goal of Dewey's democratic ideal.

Thanks to this procedure, we can make explicit the relevant considerations for establishing and sustaining meaningful and peaceful dynamic relationships with others. The underlying assumption here is that human relationships are essentially defined by how participants navigate, address, and (hopefully) resolve the problems that emerge from this underlying conflict. Experience tells us that inter-personal problems are very likely to emerge over time, no matter how hard we try to avert them. We seem to have little control over the frequency of occurrence of inter-personal problems. What we are more likely to be able to control is how we respond to such problems. Drawing on one's private experience of one-to-one relationships, it is easy to notice that the absence of a certain kind of balance has a tendency to generate destructive outcomes for one or both of its constitutive parts. If this imbalance is left unaddressed for long enough, or if the imbalance manifests itself violently enough, it results in breakdown. The relationship is terminated. Breakdown is usually emotionally painful and can be at times violently tragic. On the Deweyan view, we must hope that such breakdowns can be satisfactorily overcome or transformed for fear that failure to do so will call forth further unnecessary friction, violence, and even war.

To explain the place of conflict and violence in this context, allow me to call forth two figures from Greek mythology: Ares and Athena. Both represent two responses to friction, violence, and war.

Ares symbolises sheer brutality and chaos, while Athena symbolises social skill, wisdom, the arts of civilisation, craftsmanship, military strategy, and moral leadership. They thus correspond to two different ways of dealing with conflict: Ares expresses violence in its arbitrary, savage, and uncontrollable nature (he is described by Walter Burkert (1985, p. 169) as "overwhelming, insatiable in battle, destructive, and man-slaughtering"), while Athena personifies the idea of just war and the possibility of channelling the raw energy of rage and violence into controlled and reasoned action "she is ready to fight for her own needs and rights, for cultural achievement and human dignity and causes. For the sake of her convictions and needs she is willing also to disregard relationships and destroy old patterns that have outlived their usefulness" (Whitmont, 1982, p. 141). If Ares fights to destroy, then Athena fights in order to defend and create. Athena's creative skills enable constructive confrontation. She channels violent energies away from Ares' fury. She enables humans to constructively engage with limitation and inter-personal strife, propitiating the need to erupt in the face of inevitable frustration and tension, thus bringing into balance the opposing human impulses of aggression and community formation while avoiding unnecessary blood spill and chaos. This is relevant to our present purposes, because, in the *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion*, Jane E. Harrison (1991, p. 301) claims that "to tell the story of the making of Athene is to trace the history of the city of Athens, to trace perhaps, in so far as they can be severed, its political rather that its religious development". In reference to the battle for the patronage of Athens, Harrison contends that Poseidon represented oligarchy, while Athena represented democracy. Had he

been part of the battle, I believe it would have been appropriate to associate Ares with a violent state of perpetual anarchy. In the end, by offering an olive tree as a sign of peace and prosperity to the people, Athena won patronage of Athens. This was in fact the victory of democracy: "the real object of the worship of the citizens was not the goddess but the city herself" (Harrison, 1991, p. 301).

I thus summon the figure of Athena here because, in the last analysis, I interpret the Deweyan conception of democracy as an attempt to emulate her ability to transform violent conflict into constructive change thanks to the hallmark activity of democratic society: that is to say, open, honest, and intelligent discussion. Indeed, while Ares represents the destructive urge within all of us, the part of us that believes that all relationships are doomed from the start, fated to end in disappointment and frustration, Athena represents the constructive potential in conflict: she symbolises the part of us that believes that, with deft skills and appropriate tools, even tense and difficult aspects of relationships can be resolved in such a manner as to be mutually satisfying to all parties. I thus agree with William Caspary (2000, p. 43) when he claims that Dewey's conception of democracy as social intelligence shares features with the art of conflict-resolution. Yet, this resolution is always a work in progress. Rather like a plate atop the pole of a plate spinner, our relationships (political and otherwise) can only find their respective points of equilibria as they are in motion, for it is the motion that provides the energy that, depending on human craftsmanship, has the potential to balance or unbalance the whole affair. If the plate spinner's challenge consists in redirecting physical energies that threaten to push a plate off its gravitational

centre, then the democratic challenge consists in re-directing human energies that threaten to pull relationships and society too far out of their own points of equilibria. The Deweyan hope is that, through intelligent sublimation of destructive psychic energies we, as a collective, can better reach such equilibria.

Conclusion

In sum, we have seen that Dewey's democratic ideal offers a dynamic conception of democratic life transforming the self-conceptions, values, and interests of citizens through collective problem solving. Moreover, we have seen that Deweyan democracy envisions active citizenship as requiring more than mere political participation, but rather the willingness to participate in communal projects that enable the development of one's capacities for intelligent problem solving and ethical reasoning. This conception of democracy as a set of practices which allow for the intelligent co-creation of one's community in response to experienced strains we may call 'applied social intelligence', which can be developed through educational processes that focus on the experiential aspects of practical democratic deliberation. Ultimately, I have argued that Deweyan democracy is best understood as a form of peaceful conflict resolution which pursues a dynamic balance in interpersonal relationships, enabling the development of the capacities of all as harmoniously as possible.

In response, one might worry that Deweyan democracy is too vague to serve as a blueprint for political action. However, in response, I would argue that it is precisely Dewey's capacity to eschew a programmatic conception of democracy in favour of a

more processive vision that enables Deweyan democracy to be most responsive to the present crisis of democratic values. Instead of merely insisting on the need to preserve liberal democracy in its present form, Dewey's democratic ideal provides reasons to ensure that certain ethical principles are fostered as citizens deliberate as to how to reform existing democracies. This step back from the immediate demands of politics allows Dewey to potentially sidestep Fukuyama's epistemic arrogance, moral blindness to difference, and the political quiescence which threatens to divorce the success of democracy from the 'civic agency' (Boyte, 2014) of actual citizens. In the face ofongoing social and political turmoil, we need a conception of democratic life fit for purpose and able to deliver a vision of the role of citizens and civic agency in a world mostly defined by potential conflict, uncertainty, and flux. I hope to have shown that Dewey's democratic vision of social life and of educationprovides a promising response to this historic challenge.

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