Public Deliberation as Separate or Embedded: Deweyan Democracy and Its Relation to Political Liberalism

Ulf Zackariasson

Abstract

This paper explores two different strategies that may be useful to give substance to Deweyan democracy's claim that in order for democratic associations to develop into communities, citizens need to learn how to conduct inquiry in a social setting. The two strategies reflect a principal division among views of public deliberation. The first strategy, the separation strategy, closely resembles Rawls' political liberalism by advocating the development of a separate sphere of public deliberation, guided by factual and normative assumptions that we need not accept anywhere outside that sphere. Comprehensive doctrines are to be held outside of public deliberation, a move which makes possible a rather straightforward application of Dewey's theory of inquiry. The second strategy, the embeddedness strategy, stresses the fact that public deliberation is inevitably embedded in broader spheres of social life, and that the development towards community must be piecemeal, and go hand in hand with developments in social life as a whole. I argue that there are weighty reasons for doubting the feasibility of the separation strategy, and I also argue that these reasons are relevant for our evaluation of all versions of the separation strategy, including political liberalism. I conclude that one of Deweyan democracy's most important assets, which deserves further examination, is its insight that reflection on public deliberation needs to take its embedded character into account.

Introduction

Most liberal political philosophers share an interest in the form and quality of public

deliberation, that is, the practice wherein citizens discuss and regulate their common

affairs. The interest is understandable, since it is widely held that a well-functioning

public deliberation is both an indispensable element of just societies, and also

necessary if a democratic order is going to remain stable over time.[1] There is,

however, less agreement on what, exactly, it is that characterizes well-functioning

public deliberation, or how to achieve it.

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One of the contributors to this discussion is John Dewey, and the reception of his contributions, most clearly stated in *The Public and Its Problems*, has been rather mixed. While some philosophers have been attracted to the claim that the democratic process can become the clearest possible expression of intelligent social cooperation through a parallel between public deliberation and Dewey's theory of inquiry, it has also been pointed out that considered as a model of public deliberation, Deweyan democracy, as I shall henceforth call it, is both vague and unrealistic. It appears to presuppose a scenario where citizens share a substantial conception of what the good society is like.[2] The result has been a general uncertainty about the value of Deweyan democracy, and a tendency to avoid appeal to the idea of inquiry even among those sympathetic to Dewey's thinking. (e.g. Stout, 2004)

Although I do not believe that appeal to inquiry is crucial to make use of central Deweyan insights, I fear that we may be throwing out the baby with the bath-water if we dismiss the parallel to inquiry right away, and for the sake of this paper, I will more or less equate Deweyan democracy with the parallel between inquiry and public deliberation. I wish to look closer at two different strategies we may use to "revitalize" Deweyan democracy so that it becomes capable of meeting the objections mentioned above. The first develops Deweyan democracy in a direction similar to John Rawls' *political liberalism*. In his later writings, mainly *Political Liberalism* and "The Idea of Public Reason Revisited", Rawls emphasizes the *political* character of his version of the social contract, where public deliberation should be considered a separate sphere guided by factual assumptions and normative principles that citizens

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need not accept anywhere outside that sphere. To embrace such a *separation strategy* may certainly look tempting to a Deweyan democrat: not only would it add substance to the Deweyan approach; it might also offer the kind of shared perspectives that citizens seem to lack.

The second strategy, which I shall label the *embeddedness strategy*, emphasizes the extent to which public deliberation hangs together with other spheres of human life, and argues that public deliberation can only improve in a piecemeal fashion, and only in conjunction with broader developments towards democracy in other spheres of human life. It is in relation to this piecemeal development that the theory of inquiry can offer fruitful impulses.

The central question here is: which of these strategies should we prefer, and why? Since I believe that Deweyan democracy contains insights that have appeal far beyond the rank and file of pragmatic political philosophers, the "we" I talk about is not simply other Deweyan democrats, but also political philosophers of other persuasions. This is because the question of whether to consider public deliberation a separate sphere, or as embedded in larger spheres of social life, is a central question in political philosophy, as is obvious from e.g. the extensive debate over the viability of Rawls' political liberalism.

A brief outline of the paper is as follows: I start with an overview of Deweyan democracy, with emphasis on its parallel between public deliberation and inquiry, and

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why the parallel looks problematic. Since my points do not presuppose any novel or controversial reading of Dewey, I will not spend much time on interpreting his writings here. I will simply concentrate on what I take to be Dewey's main idea with regard to public deliberation, viz. that it ought to function along the lines suggested by the method of inquiry. Next, I present the separation strategy, and its consequences for Deweyan democracy, before I go on to present the embeddedness strategy, and show how it is different from the separation strategy. Finally, I argue that the embeddedness strategy has significant advantages. Not only does it appear to be more feasible than the separation strategy, it also puts us in a position to present an original critique of political liberalism and other models of public deliberation that operate with a separation between public deliberation and other spheres of social life, a result that thus has relevance far beyond the confines of Deweyan democracy.

Deweyan Democracy and the Separation Strategy

Dewey wrote *The Public and Its Problems* at a time when urbanization, social stratification and modern communications had made old-fashioned community structures obsolete. How may the democratic order benefit from this new situation, so that a new and larger type of community may take shape? This is one of the major questions of Deweyan democracy, and Dewey seeks to answer it through a pragmatic analysis of the public of democratic societies as maximally inclusive associations, where a particular form of interaction transforms the associations into *communities*. This is the type of interaction typical of a community of inquirers.

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Human thought and action is always situated within modes of *associated life*, that is, shared practices which regulate interaction in countless ways. (Dewey 1927, 23ff.) However, people soon realize that certain modes of associated life "have extensive and enduring consequences which involve others beyond those directly engaged in them", consequences that create a practical need for collectively coordinated responses, controlled and directed by *associations*. (Dewey 1927, 27) Associations, in turn, have other "extensive and enduring consequences" that trigger the formation of yet other associations, and so on. This process, which should not be understood as a description of actual historical events, culminates in the formation of the most inclusive association practically possible, which, in a nation-state, includes more or less all the people living within its boundaries.[3] Dewey labels this association *The Public*. (Dewey 1927, 35) The Public forms, in due time, a state to represent it, and the state is given authority to regulate certain aspects of associated life, but not others. Public deliberation, broadly conceived, is The Public's method of regulating its common affairs.

When each member (henceforth "citizen") of The Public has equal formal influence over common affairs, they live in what Dewey labels a *political democracy*. Political democracy is a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for transforming The Public into a *community*. In Dewey's own words: "association itself is physical and organic, while communal life is moral, that is, emotionally, intellectually, consciously sustained." (Dewey 1927, 151) We are "born organic beings associated with others,

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but we are not born members of a community." (Dewey 1927, 154) So, what more is required, and how may it be achieved?

Here, Dewey stresses the importance of access to accurate information about social states of affairs, and thus the importance of social scientific research, but even more, he emphasizes the need to improve "the methods and conditions of debate, discussion and persuasion". (Dewey 1927, 208) While the first is a question of developing the social sciences, the question of how to improve deliberation itself is even more central; it is *the* problem of The Public. (Dewey 1927, 208) Both accurate information and improved exchange between citizens are necessary conditions for intelligent public deliberation, which, in turn, is central for the realization of a *community*, where citizens experience public deliberation to be maximally effective in yielding fruitful solutions to the problems of The Public, solutions which benefit the community, and hence its members. Decisions will be considered legitimate to the extent that deliberation was intelligently conducted, and the experience of legitimacy generates a willingness to participate and to comply with the decisions made.

Dewey's proposal is that to make public deliberation more intelligent, citizens need to learn from successful problem solving in science and everyday life. In short, they need to learn how to *inquire* in the context of public deliberation. The improved quality of the deliberative process, as well as of the decisions made, breed a commitment to the continued existence of this public community of inquirers. Hence Dewey observes:

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> Whenever there is conjoint activity whose consequences are appreciated as good 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. The clear consciousness of a communal life, in all its implications, constitutes the idea of democracy. (Dewey 1927, 149)

It is worth noticing that "democracy" has a broader meaning here than simply "equal formal influence", and the "more", at least the part that I will concentrate on, concerns the interaction typical within a community of inquirers. From Dewey's point of view, critical thinking is not simply a means to an end, but it is at the same time the fullest expression of human potential.

However, the parallel between public deliberation and inquiry is not without its problems. Inquiry, as presented by Dewey in *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry*, is the intelligent restoration of equilibrium with the environment through a series of stages. First, the identification of a problem through a specification of the course of events which failed to bring about the expected (and desired) results; second, the development of different suggestions as to how the problem(s) identified in stage one might be resolved; third, the selection of one of the suggestions, which is then put to the test. As soon as the community of inquirers finds a satisfactory solution, inquiry comes to an end, and the community of inquirers dissolves. If the solution was unsuccessful, the community may, depending on the circumstances, select another

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solution, or choose to institute another inquiry informed by the shortcomings of the previous inquiry. (Dewey 1986, 108ff.)

Applied to the public sphere, this very brief sketch implies: search for shared problems, use the most intelligent means available (including the most accurate information) to resolve them in a satisfactory manner, and treat one another as inquirers throughout the process, that is, present arguments for your standpoints, listen to and argue against dissenting views, and so on. However, once inquiry is transferred to the public sphere, things get more complicated. Here, we already have a fixed community of inquirers, viz. The Public, which indicates that the analogy to a community of inquirers may be weaker than Dewey assumes. (cf. Smiley 1999, 642) And, even worse, why assume that all citizens comprising The Public will agree on what is problematic and what is not, and what requires collective action, and what does not? Eric MacGilvray claims that Deweyan democracy overlooks a crucial problem: how to ever be in a position to formulate shared problems that allow inquiry to get off the ground. How, asks MacGilvray, "can 'inquiry', however definite and particular, help us find 'solutions' to social problems where there is disagreement as to which public ends should be pursued?" (MacGilvray 2004, 169) In democratic states that respect basic freedoms of thought and expression, we will always find rather different views about what should be done, and why. And yet, inquiry is apparently designed for cases where citizens (the community) share a clear conception of what is problematic, and what constitutes a satisfactory solution. In a pluralistic society, a model of public deliberation which presupposes such shared standards of

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successfulness will either not work, or only work by ignoring and/or breeding hostility to dissenters. (MacGilvray 2004, 171ff) Neither alternative is attractive.

It is at this point the separation strategy presents itself as a potential remedy. No one has argued more elaborately for the separation of public deliberation from other spheres of social life than John Rawls, so I will look to his works for a version of this strategy. In his later writings, Rawls is careful to stress the *political* character of his model of public deliberation. (Rawls 1996, xlf.) To say that it is political, is to say that it is designed specifically for public deliberation, so citizens need not accept the same framework in other spheres of life. Hence, public deliberation can be considered a separate sphere, functioning independently of other parts of citizens', and society's, life.

Rawls' main concern in *Political Liberalism* is how a democratic society can remain stable over time, despite the fact that its citizens embrace substantially different conceptions of what is good and valuable. (Rawls 1996, 5) In Rawls' terms, they adhere to different *comprehensive doctrines* – general and comprehensive religious or secular conceptions of what is of value in life. (Rawls 1996, 13) Adherents of different comprehensive doctrines typically have difficulties both in reaching agreement and in conducting fruitful discussions. Therefore, Rawls introduces *public reason*, a freestanding form of reasoning designed for use in the public sphere. Whenever important political questions are at stake, citizens should leave their respective comprehensive doctrines behind, and deliberate within its bounds. Public

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reason consists, according to Rawls, of well-established knowledge and insights attained in common sense and science (controversial and disputed results left aside), and the two principles of justice that Rawls claims citizens situated behind a veil of ignorance would choose as normative guidelines for the basic structure of society. (Rawls 1996, 224f.) The first principle is, in Rawls' own words: "Each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive total system of equal basic liberties compatible with a similar system of liberty for all", and the second states that: "Social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are … to the benefit of the least advantaged … [and] attached to offices and positions open to all". (Rawls 1999, 266) The principles are lexically ordered, so that the first principle has priority in cases where they seem to conflict. When deliberating on matters of public concern, citizens thus address one another with arguments and norms that all citizens can accept as deliverances of their shared human reason, and that serves everybody's interests as citizens. Outside public deliberation, citizens should be free to develop their own conceptions of good and right, and live by them as they see fit. (Rawls 1996, 30ff., xlvii)

What looks promising here is the way public reason apparently removes the sources of disagreement between citizens, and offers the kind of shared perspective, and hence shared standards of successfulness, that the Deweyan Public seemed impotent to attain. So, by separating public deliberation from other spheres of social life, including comprehensive doctrines, the basic Deweyan appeal to inquiry may be rescued: The Public *is* capable of instituting and conducting inquiry, as long as it

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respects the normative and factual framework set by public reason. This significantly reduces the risk of disagreement over which ends The Public should pursue.

The Embeddedness Strategy as an Alternative

It looks, then, as if the separation strategy offers just the kind of shared perspective that Deweyan democracy sorely needs. Nevertheless, I will try to show that this strategy is problematic, and that these problems motivate a search for alternatives. Before I look closer at the embeddedness strategy, I want to introduce a couple of distinctions that will help me clarify my points and their relevance.

First, a distinction between two types of feasibility. A model of public deliberation can be considered feasible in (at least) two senses. First, *feasible as implemented*: this is when a model of public deliberation, once it has been implemented, functions in such a way that it sustains itself, for instance by generating the required commitment among citizens. My use of the term 'implemented' is not intended to signal that it is necessarily implemented from above; it is only meant to indicate that citizens as a matter of fact accept and use this model to regulate the way they conduct public deliberation. This is the type of feasibility Rawls is mainly concerned with in *Political Liberalism*. Besides that, a model of public deliberation can also be considered *feasible as a guiding ideal*; that is, feasible in the sense that although it may not actually ever come about, or even present a very detailed picture of how it would function if it were implemented, it offers fruitful advice with regard to how public

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deliberation in present-day societies may be improved (though what 'improved' means depends on your perspective, a point captured by my next distinction).

Second, a distinction between *internal* and *external judgments of feasibility*. Judgments of feasibility — in both the above-mentioned senses — can be made either from assumptions and values accepted within the model of public deliberation itself (which constitutes an *internal* judgment of feasibility) or from the standpoint of some other set of assumptions and values (which constitutes an *external* judgment).

The distinction between internal and external judgments of feasibility serves the function of drawing attention to two different ways in which we can make judgments of feasibility and present them to others. For instance, a Deweyan democrat facing the choice between the separation and the embeddedness strategy can appeal to values and assumptions central to Deweyan democracy (that is, internal,) to justify her choice. She may also appeal to assumptions and values that are *relatively* more widespread, and make an external judgment of feasibility, which potentially makes it more relevant for those who do not share central assumptions of Deweyan democracy.[4]

The distinction between internal and external judgments of feasibility is certainly not watertight. And I am not claiming that it is impossible to present substantial criticism of a model of public deliberation from an external perspective, criticism that may bring about significant revisions. It is, however, important to note that the kind of

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reasons, and the way you formulate them, differ in the two types of judgments, and that both are relevant in their own way for political philosophy. For my purposes, the difference is mainly relevant to distinguish between reasons for a Deweyan democrat to embrace the embeddedness strategy and reject the separation strategy, and reasons for political philosophers more generally to do the same.

Let me now sketch the alternative strategy that I, somewhat tentatively, have labelled the embeddedness strategy. It is based on two important insights. First, that inquiry – especially inquiry in a public setting, concerned with public problems – is inevitably social in character, both in the sense that in inquiries, we participate alongside others, whose views are significant for the ongoing inquiry, and in the sense that any results have consequences that extend beyond the first-person perspective. In a political democracy, anyone has the power to influence social life in a number of ways, like by forming associations that work to promote particular goals. Hence, the standpoints of other citizens are almost inevitably relevant, and dissatisfaction with the current state of affairs is itself a problem for The Public. If not dealt with, it is likely to lead to unforeseeable and perhaps harmful consequences for social life, and The Public itself. Neglect of dissent and pluralism is thus likely to prove counterproductive – even from the perspective of a majority.

Second, that the critique of Deweyan democracy presented earlier presupposes too simple a view of what it is to solve complex problems. In the simple cases, like when you fail to open a door, the problem is defined through a very specific conception of

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what a satisfactory resolution would be like. Here, the preferences/expectations that led you to institute inquiry in the first place specify in detail what a satisfactory solution to the problem must be like – it must be one where you manage to open the door. But many problems in most spheres of human life are not quite like that, and there is every reason to suppose that this goes for problems in the public sphere as well. So instead of operating with a fixed conception of which end-result inquiry must obtain, we should acknowledge that what we are prepared to consider a satisfactory solution is, to a significant extent, dependent on what inquiry itself indicates can realistically be achieved in the present situation. As a consequence, the preferences/expectations that caused us to institute a problem in the first place are not sacrosanct, but may be revised in the course of inquiry, for instance through confrontation with the standpoints and perspectives of other inquirers.

When combined, these points indicate that inquiry in the public sphere need not presuppose a shared conception of the good society, or something similar. Instead, inquiry is more directed towards discussion of how situations should be understood and dealt with – which way of seeing things that should guide The Public's measures. (cf. MacGilvray 2004) So what inquiry *does* presuppose is that The Public is actually in control – directly or indirectly – of the development of society, so that sooner or later, deliberation on common affairs is brought before The Public, and that it has a decisive influence on public affairs. As long as this is the case, then it is in everybody's interest that public deliberation functions as well as possible, that it is not taken over by bureaucrats and experts, and also that there is no widespread

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resentment, or disregard for the results of public deliberation. (Dewey 1927, 207) These assumptions can, at least to a significant extent, be justified pragmatically: given the nature of the association The Public, it is inevitable that the standpoints and perspectives of other citizens set limits to what we can count as realistic and satisfactory solutions to the problems that The Public encounters. The "conjoint activities whose consequences are appreciated as good" that Dewey talks of in the passage quoted above, can thus be understood to refer to the process of inquiry as the investigation of what can realistically be achieved in the social setting where public deliberation inevitably is set, rather than referring to the realization of any shared substantial conception of the good life, or the good society. The mistake of the critique is then to assume that inquiry must apply directly to the resolution of social problems if it is to be of any use in the public sphere.

Ironically, it is the *fixed* character of The Public – i.e. the fact that The Public does not come into existence as a community of inquirers only when facing a specific problem – that makes possible this response to the critique of Deweyan democracy presented above.

The embeddedness strategy thus helps us appreciate the complex nature of inquiry, particularly in the public sphere, and the limited prospects for a *straightforward* application of the method of inquiry. Citizens come to public deliberation with different views and ideals they wish to see realized, and that means that the relevant task of inquiry is not so much to find the best way to resolve a concrete problem, but

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rather to find ways in which to define and understand problems, and exchange meanings about these different ways. Admittedly, this presupposes some kind of democratic attitude, where we take the views of other citizens seriously, but again, this is at least to a significant extent a consequence of the fixed nature of The Public as a community of inquirers where we cannot ignore dissent if we want to find satisfactory solutions.[5]

Within a version of inquiry suitable for public deliberation, it would hence be natural to discuss the *goals* as much, or even more, than the *means* to achieve the goals (though neither can be completely ignored). These goals are, no doubt, often related to the different conceptions of society and of human flourishing that citizens embrace (their *comprehensive doctrines*, to use Rawls' terminology), and this means that unlike the separation strategy, the embeddedness strategy considers citizens' comprehensive doctrines as indispensable elements of public deliberation. Needless to say, the goal of such inquiries cannot be to achieve consensus about which goals to pursue, but rather to find working compromises with regard to concrete problems within the public sphere, compromises where we learn to accept — and perhaps even appreciate — the insights of perspectives that we do not share. (Dryzek 2004, 74)

For the embeddedness strategy, one of the central questions thus becomes: how is it possible to create conditions where public deliberation contains genuine exchange, and not simply dogmatic assertions made from within different comprehensive doctrines? Dewey frequently claimed that a central problem of the modern era is that

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while we have significantly improved our modes of thinking in fields such as medicine, technology and science, we still operate with ancient ontological categories whenever we discuss value judgments. (Dewey 1984, 210) He also attempted to supply alternatives that enable us to understand comprehensive doctrines less like fixed systems of thought and more like dynamic and evolving conceptions of human flourishing. (See Dewey 1934, Zackariasson 2002, 121ff.) I do not have the time to evaluate Dewey's proposals here, and it is important to note that any improvement of public deliberation must, to a significant extent, grow out of the practice of public deliberation itself, just as was the case with the improvements in medicine and science to which Dewey refers. No abstract account of inquiry, or of the nature of comprehensive doctrines, can thus revolutionize public deliberation all by itself, but should rather be seen as a provider of impulses and analytical tools that may help us develop elements that are already present in the practice of public deliberation itself.

So far, we have thus encountered two alternative strategies to develop Deweyan democracy. In the remainder of this paper, I shall try to show why we should prefer the embeddedness strategy, despite the fact that it is vaguer, and seems to offer less straightforward guidance, than the separation strategy.

Why to Prefer the Embeddedness Strategy

The decisive reason for rejecting the separation strategy is that embracing it would mean that Deweyan democracy inherits a central weakness of political liberalism. One of the most important critiques of political liberalism is that it is unrealistic to expect

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citizens to restrain themselves on matters where they believe that their comprehensive doctrine has something important to contribute to public deliberation. (e.g. Wolterstorff 1997, Lott 2006) Asking for such restraint may also create resentment, and marginalize groups which lack the degree of education and intellectual sophistication that political liberalism presupposes. (e.g. Weithman 2002) Embracing the embeddedness strategy enables Deweyan democracy to sidestep that critique, at least to a significant extent. Furthermore, it offers an opportunity to develop an original critique of political liberalism from a somewhat different perspective than what has been most common in the debates over political liberalism. Let me explain.

Axel Honneth concludes his sympathetic study of Dewey's political philosophy with the observation that although the appeal to inquiry may appear unrealistic, we should modify that judgment by taking into consideration that Dewey refused to see public deliberation as an insulated sphere. Instead, he sketched his views on public deliberation well aware that they require a more thoroughgoing democratization of society — which here is closely related to the development of habits of critical thought — to become possible. (Honneth 1998, 779f.) The important point is that once you insulate public deliberation in the way that Rawls recommends, you may, at the same time, slow down a process of a more comprehensive democratization, a democratization that may be essential for the long-term stability of public deliberation itself. This raises questions about whether political liberalism really is feasible as implemented, because you may certainly wonder whether citizens will ever become

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attached to a way of reasoning that may be very distant from how they reason in other significant spheres of life, which seems to be what Rawls asks of them.

Rawls is certainly not unaware of this problem, and in response to it, he provides a sketch of an *overlapping consensus* that may develop over time among citizens, where everybody, regardless of which comprehensive doctrine they embrace, agree that public reason should be used within public deliberation. (Rawls 1996, xxxixff.) Originally, this may come about as a *modus vivendi*, where no one wishes to comply with the dictates of someone else's comprehensive doctrine, but gradually, as public reason shows its worth, the initially grudging acceptance of the *modus vivendi* may change, so that the conviction that use of public reason is the appropriate way to deal with public affairs, becomes an established part of the comprehensive doctrines themselves. (Rawls 1996, xlii) This makes political liberalism more stable than any contingent balance of power, because it would remain in sway even if society changes in such a way that the balance of power is upset.

The problem with this response — and the separation strategy in general — is that, since Rawls remains agnostic about how comprehensive doctrines function, and clearly states that they are unaffected by public reason (except for the way in which acceptance of public reason becomes part of the comprehensive doctrine itself), he cannot supply any "guarantee"[6] that even if an overlapping consensus is ever reached, it will remain in sway. Comprehensive doctrines may develop over time in directions where they at some point come to reject public reason, which would cause the

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overlapping consensus to collapse. The point is that there is nothing in political liberalism itself that gives us any reason to believe that this will not happen.[7]

From a Deweyan perspective, this weakness stems at least in part from the strict exclusion of comprehensive doctrines from public deliberation, which is one of the spaces where they may actually become engaged in serious exchange with other perspectives, and where a genuine appreciation of other comprehensive doctrines may begin to develop, an appreciation that may be significantly more conducive to stability than public reason is. Most of the time, the question of the role of comprehensive doctrines has concerned itself with whether citizens have a moral right to "use" their comprehensive doctrines in public deliberation or not. Then, you overlook the fact that "using" your comprehensive doctrine in public deliberation does something to that comprehensive doctrine, whether you will or not – at least in a society with an ongoing public debate. There is no lack of historical examples of religiously based movements that have undergone significant changes in the confrontation with practical tasks and problems of a political nature, either within or outside public deliberation. It would be naïve to think that this has no repercussions for the comprehensive doctrines themselves. The Deweyan approach urges us to pay attention to such changes, and ask whether they may be a beneficial element in a more substantial democratization process that is needed to secure a long-term improvement of public deliberation.

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My critique of the separation strategy has both an internal and an external character. Internally, from a Deweyan perspective, the separation strategy is problematic because it threatens to slow down a more comprehensive democratization of society by severing the links between public deliberation and other spheres of social life, including comprehensive doctrines. This is certainly problematic given Dewey's frequent stress on the importance of a "critical furthering of culture" and comprehensive democratization. (Dewey 1958, 37) But even if you do not accept that "internal" reason for rejecting the separation strategy, there is a more accessible — external — reason for rejecting the separation strategy, and thus also political liberalism. If comprehensive doctrines are actually separated from the public sphere, we have little reason to expect that an overlapping consensus will remain stable regardless of how citizens' comprehensive doctrines develop over time. Political liberalism thus fails to deliver what it promises.

This critique, regardless of whether we formulate it in internal or external terms, indicates that it is unlikely that the separation strategy is capable of providing a model of public deliberation that is feasible either as implemented or as guiding. As implemented, it offers no good reason to think that an overlapping consensus is more stable than a contingent balance of power, as long as comprehensive doctrines can continue to develop in more or less any direction; as guiding, it faces the problems of causing resentment, and the problem that the approach lacks overall feasibility. Regardless of which of these types of feasibility we give priority to, the separation strategy thus looks problematic.

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This critique stands, I would say, regardless of whether there are any viable alternatives to the separation strategy or not. Nevertheless, for the sake of Deweyan democracy, it might be interesting to turn attention to the embeddedness strategy and raise the question about *its* feasibility. Does it actually fare any better than the separation strategy, and if not, where does that leave Deweyan democracy?

There are two important points to note before you set out to answer this question. First of all, it is not possible to simply connect the embeddedness strategy to an already existing model of public deliberation as was possible with the separation strategy – or so I shall assume. Second, since the embeddedness strategy by its very nature connects public deliberation to other spheres of social life, including comprehensive doctrines, this also means that the embeddedness strategy will present a more probing, less clear-cut model of public deliberation. This is not to say that the embeddedness strategy has nothing enlightening to say about public deliberation, but it does indicate that its contributions will be of a more tentative and contextual nature than those of the separation strategy.

I have already distinguished between two different ways in which a model of public deliberation can be considered feasible – as implemented and as guiding. For Rawls, feasibility as implemented appears to be the central virtue of any model of public deliberation, while he pays significantly less attention to how it may be achieved. However, from the embeddedness strategy's point of view, it will seem natural to turn

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attention more to feasibility as guiding (although not ignoring feasibility as implemented entirely), since there will be such a significant gap between public deliberation as it stands presently, and how it ideally should function. Although this gap may be equally large – or even larger – within the separation strategy, there is nevertheless a significant difference between the two strategies, in that the separation strategy offers a relatively concrete and fast "cure", in which we learn to separate public deliberation from other spheres of social life, while the embeddedness strategy must take recourse to a number of small steps to present a realistic account of how public deliberation may improve.

So, if we start from the present standing of public deliberation, in which direction would the Deweyan democrat recommend us to look if we are serious about improving public deliberation? One opportunity is, of course, to explore the affinities between Deweyan democracy and certain versions of deliberative democracy, where comprehensive doctrines are integrated into the deliberative process, and see whether the theory of inquiry has important insights to offer deliberative democracy.[8] While this certainly looks interesting, I think that there are other opportunities that deserve attention. One, which should become increasingly important as citizens communicate less and less face to face and more and more via web logs, chat rooms, and other written media, is to look closer at communication and debate conducted via texts, to see how it may be possible to conduct a fruitful debate where comprehensive doctrines are an integrated element of the discussion. Here, it may be interesting to see, for instance, whether the theory of inquiry can help us identify positive

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tendencies and deepen our understanding of how and why they function, as well as how to develop them. In short, we need to look at fruitful use of comprehensive doctrines in public deliberation to learn more about fruitful use of comprehensive doctrines in public deliberation!

The point of looking closer at concrete examples of contributions to public deliberation is that rather than inventing new practices of public deliberation from scratch, we may be able to find fruitful tendencies already at work, tendencies that may be encouraged and strengthened through a deepened theoretical understanding of how and why they work. This is a logical approach given the orientation of the embeddedness strategy. Furthermore, since public deliberation has been going on for centuries, literary speaking, it would be strange indeed to claim that it has failed to make any progress. Here is where the theory of inquiry may function as an important provider of analytical tools, rather than as a blueprint to which public deliberation must conform.

Someone may object that I have criticized the separation strategy for something that the embeddedness strategy is equally unable to supply – that is, an overall feasible model of public deliberation. Admittedly, the sketch of the embeddedness strategy is vague, and needs development. But that is different from saying that it lacks feasibility. It is rather that emphasis is moved to whether models of public deliberation are feasible as guiding or not, simply because this is the most relevant question if you consider public deliberation as embedded in wider spheres of social

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life. This means asking new kinds of questions. The usefulness of the parallel between inquiry and public deliberation is thus not primarily determined by whether the end-product is feasible, but rather whether the theory of inquiry may be a useful tool in attempts to improve the current standing of public deliberation or not. Here, a lot of work remains, but it is certainly too early to give up this approach before it has been tried out.

Concluding Remarks

My conclusion in this paper is that there are good reasons for resisting the temptation to develop Deweyan democracy in the direction suggested by the separation strategy, where it comes to resemble Rawls' political liberalism. Instead, I have argued, Deweyan democracy, understood along the lines of the embeddedness strategy, actually gives us conceptual resources to articulate what is problematic with separation strategies: that if comprehensive doctrines are withdrawn from public deliberation, they are also withdrawn from a more general process of democratization that may be necessary if public deliberation is to remain stable over time. The critique of the separation strategy can be formulated in an internal fashion, thus presupposing the values and assumptions central to Deweyan democracy, but it can also be formulated in a more external fashion, where it appeals to more generally accepted assumptions and values about public deliberation. As such, my results have implications that are relevant outside the more limited context of Deweyan democracy.

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Adopting the embeddedness strategy has the consequence of turning focus away from feasibility as implemented and more towards feasibility as guiding. Here, the potential contribution of the theory of inquiry might be to help us trace and develop fruitful tendencies in concrete public deliberation, rather than present us with an end-product that may or may not be attainable in a distant future – although reflections on feasibility as implemented can never be completely ignored.

This should not be taken to mean that the separation strategy is devoid of important insights. One such insight that Deweyan democracy needs to take to heart is that if a significant majority of citizens embrace the same comprehensive doctrine, the effect may be that the interest for serious discussion is lacking. Hence, the already existing positive tendencies that the theory of inquiry could help us detect and develop may be rare, as long as there is no genuine need to take dissenting views seriously. It would be naïve to think that public deliberation will always fix itself, if given enough time. It is partially therefore reflection on e.g. the prospects of drawing on the theory of inquiry to improve public deliberation is important.[9]

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NOTES

[1] At least if society is going to remain stable for what John Rawls calls "the right reasons", by which he means that stability should not be upheld through, for example, a balance of power between competing religious traditions with roughly equal influence, or some similar arrangement. Stability must also be such as to secure and generate important political goods, like (in Rawls' case) civic friendship and mutual trust. (Rawls 1996, li, 163)

[2] Thinkers sympathetic to some of the central ideas of Dewey's political philosophical thinking include Putnam (1995), Guinlock (1978), Bernstein (1987), Ryan (1997), Savage (2002), and Caspary (2000).

[3] Of course, there is nothing about this analysis that limits it to nation-states, should new types of publics come into existence.

[4] There is a further aspect to the distinction between internal and external judgments of feasibility: the judgment whether a model of public deliberation is feasible or not is not simply something we could try out via an experiment. It also involves giving assent to the *type of society* that would be the result of implementing the model of public deliberation, or use it as a guiding ideal. This means that there are normative aspects to any judgment of feasibility. With regard to this, external judgments can be considered the judgments that depend on relatively widely accepted normative assumptions about good models of public deliberation, while internal judgments appeal more directly to normative assumptions specific for a particular thinker, "school" or "perspective".

[5] Hence a Deweyan understanding of 'community' is different from Rawls, who understands a community as a group of citizens "united in affirming the same comprehensive doctrine." (Rawls 1996, 146)

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[6] I do not think that Rawls must present any absolute guarantee that an overlapping consensus will remain stable no matter what. As Richard Rorty frequently claims, the idea that philosophy should seek to provide *guarantees*, or absolute certainty, is itself rather dubious. (e.g. Rorty 1982) When I speak of 'guarantee' here, I mean something that makes it likely that an overlapping consensus will remain stable over time by virtue of being an overlapping consensus. This is what Rawls does not supply us with.

[7] Rawls distinguishes between reasonable and unreasonable comprehensive doctrines, where one part of what it is for a comprehensive doctrine to be reasonable is that it "does not reject the essentials of a democratic regime."
(Rawls 1996, xviii) But surely, a comprehensive doctrine can meet that condition and, at the same time, reject political liberalism, which hardly belongs to the essentials of a democratic regime. The distinction between reasonable and unreasonable comprehensive doctrines does not, then, enable Rawls to give a satisfactory answer to the critique I have presented here.

[8] See, for instance, Bohman (1996) and even more the articles of the special edition of *Journal of Speculative Philosophy* on pragmatism and deliberative democracy (vol. 18, no. 1, 2004).

[9] Many of the central ideas in this paper began to take form during a stay at the Social Values Research Centre at the Philosophy Department, University of Hull. I am grateful for the hospitality and encouragement I met there. I am also grateful for valuable comments from an anonymous referee at *Minerva*.

Dr. Ulf Zackariasson teaches philosophy at Agder University, Kristiansand, Norway.

Email: **ulf.zackariasson@uia.no**

Ulf Zackariasson