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Peircean Epistemic Democracy: Truth, Pluralism, and Religion

By

Robert William Mittendorf

Claremont Graduate University

2020

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Approval of the Dissertation Committee

This dissertation has been duly read, reviewed, and critiqued by the Committee listed below, which hereby approves the manuscript of Robert William Mittendorf as fulfilling the scope and quality requirements for meriting the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Religion.

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Abstract

Peircean Epistemic Democracy: Truth, Pluralism, and Religion

By

Robert William Mittendorf

Claremont Graduate University: 2020

In this dissertation, I argue for a pluralist Peircean epistemic approach to democratic justification to address the challenge of reasonable pluralism. Whereas public reason approaches to democratic justification require citizens privatize their worldviews, an epistemic approach to democracy allows citizens the freedom to express their personal reasons while harnessing the epistemic power of democracy to identify and solve social problems. I find that of the various epistemic approaches available, Cheryl Misak and Robert Talisse's Peircean Epistemic Defense of Democracy (PED) is the most promising because it is widely inclusive of personal reasons, uses pluralism to further the epistemic goals of democracy, and offers a robust defense of democratic procedures, norms, and institutions. The PED argues that beliefs aim at truth, and in holding a belief properly, one must engage in a process of reason exchange to support the truth of that belief. Moreover, only in a democracy can one properly engage in this process of reason exchange due to the epistemic requirements of an open society.

The Peircean requirements for proper believing have been criticized for allegedly being oppressive and exclusive in a similar manner to public reason. What I call the 'faith objection' claims that the epistemic norms of religious belief and faith are different and even contradictory to the epistemic norms imposed by the PED. I disagree with this objection and argue that the

PED is inclusive of religious reasons because religious belief and faith are sufficiently responsive to reasons and evidence. Though this raises a new challenge: if the PED is radically inclusive, to what extent will reasons that are inaccessible, incommensurable, weak, or false corrupt the epistemic environment of democracy? For the PED to avoid the faith objection, it will need to include reasons that are out of the ordinary, for example, conspiracy theories. But if conspiracy theories or other non-traditional modes of reasoning are rampant in democratic deliberation, then there may be a decline in the epistemic functioning of democracy, thus endangering the epistemic justification the PED is built upon. I argue that while the challenge of including non-traditional reasoning is difficult, it also offers the opportunity for new paths towards truth. These non-traditional forms of reasoning may be novel approaches to truth that only some democratic citizens have access. By including conspiracy theories, religion, or other inaccessible and incommensurable reasoning in public deliberation, the PED can be inclusive of all democratic citizens, while offering a robust justification of democracy.

To my parents, Peggy and Bob

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Table of Contents

Abstract ii
Table of Contents vi
Chapter 1: Introduction 1
1.1 Defining the Problem 1
1.2 What Pragmatism Is 3
1.3 Statement of Purpose 8
1.4 Chapter Outline 10
Chapter 2: Religion and Public Reason 13
2.1 Introduction 13
2.2 Deliberative Democracy 15
2.3 Public Reason Liberalism 18
2.4 Rawls and Public Reason Liberalism 21
2.5 Critiques of Public Reason Liberalism 29
2.5.1 Fairness Objection 29
2.5.2 Integrity Objection 32
2.5.3 Denial of Truth Objection 34
2.5.4 Anti-Democratic Objection 40
2.5.5 Incomplete and Self-defeating Objection 42
2.5.6 Postsecular Objection 43
2.6 Conclusion 45
Chapter 3: The Epistemic Turn 47
3.1 Introduction 47
3.2 Democratic Justification and Legitimacy 49
3.3 Correctness Theories 53
3.4 Epistemic proceduralism 60
3.5 Deweyan Deliberativism 66
3.6 The Peircean Epistemic Defense 72

3.7 Conclusion 79
Chapter 4: The Faith Objection 81
4.1 Introduction 81
4.2 The Faith Objection 81
4.3 Evidentialism and the PED 87
4.4 Doxastic Faith 94
4.4.1 Natural Theology 94
4.4.2 Reformed Theology 97
4.4.3 Fideism 101
4.5 Nondoxastic Faith 109
4.5.1 Faith as Trust 110
4.5.2 Faith as Assent 113
4.5.3 Faith as Acquiescence 117
4.5.4 Faith as Orientation 122
4.6 Conclusion 125
Chapter 5: The Cognitive Environment of Democracy 126
5.1 Introduction 126
5.2 Inclusive or Exclusive? 128
5.3 The Democratic Value of Epistemic Vice 132
5.4 Accessibility 135
5.5 Weak Reasoning and False Beliefs 140
5.6 Incommensurable Vocabularies 150
5.7 Conclusion 162
Chapter 6: Conclusion 163
6.1 Summary 163
6.2 Practical Implications of Epistemic Inclusivity 166
6.3 Opportunities for Future Research 170
Bibliography 173

Chapter One: Introduction

Democracy is freedom. If truth is at the bottom of things, freedom means giving this truth a chance to show itself, a chance to well up from the depths. Democracy, as freedom, means the loosening of bonds, the wearing away of restrictions, the breaking down of barriers, of middle walls, of partitions. Through this doing away with restrictions, whatever truth, whatever reality there is in a man's life is freed to express itself. Democracy is, as freedom, the freeing of truth.

– John Dewey

No one of us ought to issue vetoes to the other, nor should we bandy words of abuse. We ought, on the contrary, delicately and profoundly to respect one another's mental freedom: then only shall we bring about the intellectual republic; then only shall we have that spirit of inner tolerance without which all our outer tolerance is soulless, and which is empiricism's glory; then only shall we live and let live, in speculative as well as in practical things.

– William James

Upon this first, and in one sense this sole, rule of reason, that in order to learn you must desire to learn, and in so desiring not be satisfied with what you already incline to think, there follows one corollary which itself deserves to be inscribed upon every wall of the city of philosophy: Do not block the way of inquiry.

– Charles Sanders Peirce

1.1 Defining the Problem

What role ought truth play in a democracy? Should we abandon our deeply held beliefs in favor of finding a common ground with our political peers, or should we risk deepening disagreement with appeals to our own views of the fundamental nature of reality? In our post-

truth political predicament, the demand for truth is higher than ever, and yet, political philosophers have repeatedly argued against including truth in deliberation. Political liberals, most famously, John Rawls, argue that truth is detrimental to the deliberative process, claiming that when we bring reasons stemming from our own comprehensive moral, religious, or philosophical doctrines into public debate, we disrespect fellow citizens, oppressing them with reasons that they can reasonably reject, and ultimately, we jeopardize the legitimacy of democratic outcomes. We ought rather to stay on the surface of the debate and only use reasons that can be agreed upon by all, reasons that are public.

Rawls correctly identifies the democratic dilemma: democracy will lead to an increase in pluralism, but more diversity also means more disagreement and the foundational justifications of democracy will become more controversial, thus undermining democracy. Liberalism responds to this problem by arguing against the use of truth and instead for the use of public reasons, in this way we can justify democratic outcomes on less controversial terms. But how can these moral norms be imposed on citizens pre-deliberatively if the point of democracy is to deliberate to determine what those norms ought to be? Moreover, by excluding truth from the debate, does public reason lose out on an essential feature of democracy, that democracy exists to solve problems? By favoring the reasonable over the true, public reason seems to lose the ability to address issues facing society through collective reasoning. To put it simply, if we are not offering what we consider to be the best reasons to solve problems, then what's the point of democratic deliberation in the first place?

The debate over public reason also indicates a larger problem with moral justifications of democracy: either a theory of democracy needs to lay out pre-deliberative procedures that uphold a moral standard like fairness, or a theory needs to explicate post-deliberative outcomes like

equality that determine if the process is morally sufficient. In either case, a moral view of democracy is assumed, but one that can be reasonably rejected by those with conflicting moral views. Removing truth does not remove the objective dimension of deliberation, nor does it remove disagreement. It is therefore worthwhile to look to another mode of democratic justification that is not dependent on morality but rather on the epistemic abilities of democracy.

In this dissertation, I suggest that when it comes to theorizing about democracy, including truth in the deliberative process is the most promising way to justify democracy in a pluralist society. Truth matters in democratic debate and the current post-truth challenge illustrates that need. When citizens no longer trust the epistemic abilities of democratic institutions—the free press, an impartial judiciary, schools and universities—then citizens will choose to exit democracy, not by leaving society, but by using disinformation, intimidation, and manipulation to cheat the democratic process, and, in the extreme, violence to silence opponents. Democratic theorists need to find a convincing justification for democracy that is inclusive of diverse citizens while maintaining a commitment to truth. I suggest looking to a pragmatist theory of democracy for this justification.

1.2 What Pragmatism Is

William James first proposed the name "Pragmatism" in 1898 to describe the work of Charles Sanders Peirce and his 'pragmatic maxim', the maxim which places the importance or meaning of belief in the actions which are guided by that belief. James says,

> To attain perfect clearness in our thoughts of an object, then, we need only consider what effects of a conceivably practical kind the object may involve what sensations we are to

> expect from it, and what reactions we must prepare. Our conception of these effects, then, is for us the whole of our conception of the object, so far as that conception has positive significance at all.

Upon giving this definition, James immediately thwarts it:

> This is the principle of Peirce, the principle of pragmatism. I think myself that it should be expressed more broadly than Mr. Peirce expresses it.

It is fitting that James complicates the initial characterization of pragmatism since one of the historically defining features of pragmatism is the failure to have a comprehensive definition of pragmatism.

The 'classical pragmatists', Charles Sanders Peirce, William James, and John Dewey thoroughly debated the meaning of pragmatism. Peirce saw pragmatism as a way to clear up philosophical errors and "metaphysical nonsense" by focusing on the practical effects of belief. He disliked ontological metaphysics, claiming at one point that the "demonstrations of metaphysicians are all moonshine."[1] James's pragmatism allowed for metaphysical thought and held that pragmatism could help adjudicate traditional metaphysical controversies by looking towards practice as the final arbiter. Given two different philosophical definitions or maxims that contradict each other, if one were to suppose the truth of one or the other but it makes no

[1] C. S. Peirce, *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, ed. C. Hartshorne and P. Weiss (v. 1-6); Arthur Burks (v. 7-8), (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1931-1958. 8 v.), 1.7.

practical consequence then, according to James, "the difference between the two propositions is no difference…[and] unworthy of further contention."[2]

Dewey rejected both views. He appreciated the reconstructing of philosophical problems, but rather than using pragmatism to either reject or settle metaphysical controversies, he viewed pragmatism as a way to socialize philosophical problems. He saw many of these traditional philosophical problems arising out of pre-scientific, pre-Darwinian concerns about the way the world works, and many of these concerns were simply out-of-date. Dewey viewed pragmatism as inquiry into the world while rejecting the dualisms of the past. Where Peirce looked at practice as a way to reject certain propositions, and James used practice as a measuring stick, Dewey rejected entire philosophies as being out of touch and useless (although not necessarily meaningless).

Pragmatism waned in the middle of the 20th century as logical positivism and the analytic school of philosophy began to dominate the landscape. This emphasis on logic and conceptual analysis veered away from Dewey's contextual, historicized philosophy. Despite the work of some 'middle' pragmatists, such as Sidney Hook and C. I. Lewis, the pragmatic approach to philosophy seemed to lose its momentum. The revival of pragmatism in the late 20th century is mainly attributed to Richard Rorty who skillfully reconstructed pragmatic ideas from Dewey and James into an analytic style. Rorty argued in his 1979 book, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, that philosophers needed to abandon traditional goals of attaining certainty and objectivity through foundations of knowledge. Rather, knowledge creation is a cooperative social

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[2] William, James, "Philosophical Conceptions and Practical Results" *University Chronicle* (Berkeley, CA: University Press, 1898), 292.

function, and philosophy should be in the business of fostering solidarity. Rorty is considered a 'neo-pragmatist', another controversial term, which, depending on who you ask, also includes influential philosophers such as W.V.O. Quine, William Sellers, Hilary Putnam, and Donald Davidson. The neo-pragmatist tag is controversial because it is most closely associated with Rorty, post-modernism, and a more Jamesian anti-objectivist take on philosophy; used more loosely, the term simply refers to those philosophers who demonstrate influence by classical pragmatist ideas.

An even more recent collection of philosophers who draw upon pragmatism, but do not wish to be grouped in the neo-pragmatist camp alongside Rorty, embrace the banner of 'new pragmatists'. The neo-pragmatism of Rorty rejected objectivity to the point that this next wave of pragmatists took up the case, as new pragmatist, Cheryl Misak, says, "to do justice to the objective dimension of human inquiry." Misak locates three 'pillars' of new pragmatism. First, they hold that standards of objectivity change over time, but that this historical situation does not lessen their objectivity. Second, they take an anti-foundationalist stance to knowledge: "all beliefs, no matter how strongly held, are fallible."[3] The third pillar involves keeping philosophy "connected to first-order inquiry, to real examples, to real-life expertise."[4]

Despite the wide range in pragmatist philosophies and historically constant disagreement over what defines pragmatism, there are a few things that can be said about pragmatism in general. Pragmatism sees inquiry both as an intractable part of human experience and the method

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[3] Cheryl Misak, *New Pragmatists* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007), 2.

[4] Misak, *New Pragmatists*, 4.

in which to remove doubt. Pragmatism is an approach to philosophy that focuses on human experience and is reflexive to the social, emphasizing action and practical consequences. Pragmatism takes a scientific approach to inquiry, but also provides tools to support religious belief and some metaphysical thinking. Pragmatists are fallibilists but also anti-skeptics. Pragmatists look to overcome the challenges of pluralism and contingency, not by simply offering critical takes, but reconstructing practices and institutions, and approaching these issues from a situated rather than a universal point of view, moving away from ontological and ideal approaches.

Within the field of political philosophy, pragmatism is beginning to carve out its niche. Contemporary pragmatists such as Cornel West, Richard Rorty, Cheryl Misak, Robert Talisse, Hilary Putnam, Eric MacGilvray, Elizabeth Anderson, and Roberto Frega have revived pragmatist political theory with a focus on pluralism and the epistemic dimension of political justification. West and Rorty have focused on social solidarity and the need for a robust defense of political freedom and equality. Deweyan and Peircean theorists focus on the epistemic abilities of democracy to identify and create solutions to social problems.

Cheryl Misak and Robert Talisse offer a justification for democracy based on Peirce's claim that belief aims at inquiry. They claim that our epistemic commitments to truth are universal and therefore, offer a foundation for a non-oppressive conception of democratic norms, institutions, and processes. Since belief necessarily implies a true belief, the act of holding a belief suggests that we think have the best reasons for that belief. This in turn self-imposes the need to assert our reasons in the public sphere so we can test our beliefs against the beliefs of others and respond to their criticism by revising, maintaining, or rejecting our beliefs. The Peirceans argue that the only environment that allows for the free exchange of reasons necessary

for our commitment to true belief is a democracy. However, the Peirceans fail to offer a clear accounting for what Talisse calls the "special case" of religious belief. Religious beliefs generally include a different standard for evidence and may not be responsive to reasons in the same way as 'ordinary' beliefs. In fact, several critics claim that because religious beliefs do not fit the Peircean model of belief, the PED is exclusionary of religious citizens, which causes the PED to fail in its defense of democracy.

1.3 Statement of Purpose

In this dissertation, I defend the PED from critics who claim that the PED is oppressive to religious reasoning, and I argue for an inclusive, pluralistic conception of the Peircean epistemic defense that utilizes the epistemic resources of a diverse society for the democratic goal of identifying and solving social problems. The purpose of this dissertation is both to expand the scholarship on the PED, specifically as it relates to religious reasoning, and to support a pluralistic conception of epistemic democracy more broadly. I suggest that including non-traditional modes of understanding in democratic deliberation is a challenge to the cognitive environment of democracy, but it also has social epistemic benefits. These non-traditional modes of reasoning can offer novel approaches to truth. By including non-traditional modes of reasoning, such as conspiracy theories, religion, and other inaccessible and incommensurable reasoning in public deliberation, the PED can be inclusive of all democratic citizens, while offering a robust justification of democracy.

The Peircean epistemic defense is a promising approach to democratic justification because it utilizes the rich resources from the pragmatist tradition. Historically, pragmatism has

offered an approach to philosophy that bridges the divide between scientific and religious worldviews. It also provides a middle way through the impasse between mainstream epistemology and religious epistemology that can solve some of the issues inherent in epistemic approaches to democracy. By theorizing about the relationship between the knower and the known, pragmatism naturalizes epistemology. It looks at truth via the knower and so, it is a human-centered approach to truth. This Peircean view does not reject objective truth; although, it does question both our ability to reach objective truth and our ability to know when we have reached it. The Peircean view of truth is that it is 'the end of inquiry'. When we inquire as far as we can, testing our beliefs thoroughly, that is what we call truth. This definition works for those who take objective truth to be 'out there' for us to discover because when we inquire as fully as possible, we end up at the truth. But this definition also makes no commitment to objective truth. Peirce's definition of truth leaves the door open for various forms of truth—multiple truth hypotheses—even if there is, ultimately, one truth out there. Objections to the pragmatic conception of truth from mainstream epistemology abound, but those can be sidestepped here without concern because this definition of truth applies to the political realm where it is well established that confirming one truth over another is anti-democratic. The Peircean conception of truth works for democracy because it acknowledges that we each aim at truth. In other words, we each hold that our beliefs are true beliefs, otherwise we would withhold our belief while we continue to inquire. This takes seriously the objective nature of truth—we each take it that truth can be acquired—while allowing for pluralism through these multiple truth hypotheses.

This pragmatic approach to truth is a way to keep truth in democratic debate without falling into the trap of validating one truth over another. Peircean truth is pluralistic in its inquiry without necessarily making truth itself plural. Peircean reasoning is pluralistic, and the Peircean

epistemic defense harnesses the diversity of forms of reasoning to improve the epistemic ability of democracy to solve problems. We each have our own reasons that we take to support our beliefs. To form beliefs, we need a social-epistemic environment that allows us the freedom to inquire to the truth of these beliefs, and only a democratic system can provide the necessary environment in which to properly inquire towards truth.

1.4 Chapter Outline

In Chapter Two, I set the stage for the discussion of pragmatist epistemic democracy by arguing that liberal public reason approaches to democratic justification are insufficient because these approaches reject truth for what is reasonable. This is problematic for two main reasons, although I offer several. First, the requirement of public reason can exclude religious citizens, many of whom may be unable to 'translate' their religious reasons into public reasons. It may also be an unfair burden to those citizens, a burden many non-religious citizens do not have. Second, in rejecting truth for what is reasonable, liberal approaches negate the epistemic power of democracy to identify and solve social problems. A pluralistic society has vast resources of imbedded knowledge and because this type of knowledge specifically does not overlap with other citizens', it is rejected by public reason liberalism. However, this form of knowledge can offer resources to solve social problems that are outside the mainstream. I suggest looking instead at epistemic theories of democracy that include truth as part of the deliberative process to harness the epistemic power of diverse communities.

In Chapter Three, I discuss the 'epistemic turn' in deliberative democracy and outline various forms of epistemic democracy. An epistemic approach to democracy can view the

epistemic diversity of citizens as a resource to democratic deliberation rather than a challenge to overcome. For example, correctness theories, such as the Condorcet Jury Theorem and the Diversity Trumps Ability Theorem, argue that epistemic diversity leads to better solutions to social problems. Democracy is therefore the best political system because it is the most efficient at aggregating knowledge. David Estlund's epistemic proceduralism takes this insight and adds that democracy also offers a fair procedure for solving problems, and this balance of fairness and epistemic efficiency makes democracy the epistemically best *and* most just system. Lastly, I discuss the pragmatist epistemic approaches. Though the Deweyan approaches harness the epistemic abilities of democracy and offer a stronger conception of the constitutive powers of democracy than Estlund, I argue that the Peircean system is superior because it offers a robust defense of democratic norms, practices, and institutions by appealing to the internal commitments of citizens rather than imposing these norms pre-deliberatively.

In Chapter Four, I engage with the recent criticisms of the PED, which claim that the PED is oppressive by imposing epistemic standards on religious believers that they can reasonably reject. To counter these claims, I canvass a variety of conceptions of religious belief and faith to determine if these conceptions are, as the criticism claims, not responsive to reasons and evidence. I find that doxastic conceptions of religious belief conform to the PED's evidentialist requirements, widely construed. Non-doxastic conceptions of faith are still reason responsive to Peircean standards, and those faith propositions which are not reason responsive are narrowly tailored to specific situations, so, faith holders by and large still have regular, daily commitments to believe in the Peircean sense. I argue that the faith objection to the PED is overstated. Religion and the PED are compatible.

In Chapter Five, I evaluate the implications of the PED if religious reasons are included in public deliberation. My concern is that if the PED takes a position of wide inclusivity, then weak, false, and inaccessible reasons will clog the cognitive environment, thus causing democracy to fail in its epistemic functions. If this inclusive democracy can no longer provide the conditions necessary for citizens to properly inquire for truth, then the PED as a justification for democracy fails. I look, not at religious beliefs, but rather conspiracy theories as emblematic of this problem. Using James's idea of live and dead options, I conclude that inaccessible reasons, like (some) religious beliefs and conspiracy theories, are useful in social inquiry because the reasoners can determine truths that other non-believers cannot.

Chapter Two: Religion and Public Reason

2.1 Introduction

One of the central issues in political philosophy is the challenge of political justification. Political power is necessarily a coercive power and by many accounts that coercion needs to be justified. If members of any given society do not view political power as justified (either in practice or under ideal conditions), then what motivates them to follow laws and accept political decisions? In the social contract theories of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, e.g., Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, and Kant, state power is justified through the consent of the governed. Contemporary political theory, which is now decidedly democratic, has tilted towards the idea that political power requires public justification. The *Public Justification Principle* (PJP) states that a coercive law is justified if each member of the public has sufficient reason to endorse that law.[7] Theories that define political justification through the exchange of reasons generally fall under the category of deliberative democracy, and, in some cases, more specifically as public reason liberalism.

There is, however, a practical difficulty facing these deliberative theories. Justifying democratic decisions is particularly difficult in a pluralistic society. The nature of democracy—a system which promotes freedom of thought—seems to lead to an increased pluralism both of

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[7] See Kevin Vallier, *Liberal Politics and Public Faith: Beyond Separation* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 24. Versions of the PJP have also been formulated by numerous authors, and most famously by John Rawls, Gerald Gaus, Charles Larimore, and Jonathan Quong.

ideas and demographics, thus increasing the difficulty in finding justificatory reasons which are sufficient for all citizens. The liberal political philosopher, John Rawls, refers to this feature of democracy as the “fact of reasonable pluralism,” that in a democracy, a pluralism of reasonable worldviews will increase over time.[8] Democracy provides both the environment in which plurality and disagreement can flourish, and the mechanisms that help mitigate these disagreements, but too much pluralism may strain these mechanisms.

A challenge to public justification is the role of religious reasons in justifying coercive laws. Religious reasons are seen by many advocates of the PJP approach as being either insufficiently public, or inadequate as reasons. These ‘public reason liberals’, John Rawls, Robert Audi, and Gerald Gaus, believe that any non-public reason, or reasons which are founded solely on one’s personal comprehensive moral doctrine, ought not to be used in public justification. This creates a unique challenge to religious reasons, which are almost by definition, non-public reasons.

However, there has been a significant pushback against this requirement of omission from a wide contingency, notably, Nicholas Wolterstorff, Christopher Eberle, and Michael Sandel, who argue that the requirement of public reason significantly limits the ability of religious citizens to engage in the political process of reason exchange. Furthermore, that public reason liberalism is itself a comprehensive moral doctrine which sets the limits of debate in favor of the liberal position before debate even begins. Following these criticisms, I argue that the

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[8] John Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 63.

liberal requirement of public reason is an inadequate response to the challenge of pluralism in democratic justification and should be abandoned.

2.2 Deliberative Democracy

In the last half century, there has been a decidedly deliberative turn in democratic theory. In contradistinction to participatory democracy, which highlights the direct action of citizens, and aggregative or proceduralist democracy, which is concerned with the basic procedures of democracy (i.e., fair and equal voting), deliberative democracy is a normative approach that emphasizes the reciprocity of reason exchange between citizens. This deliberative turn has ancient roots in Aristotle, and a modern formulation in Rousseau's *Social Contract*, but the contemporary use of the term can be traced to the 1980's with Joseph Bessette's article "Deliberative Democracy: The Majority Principle in Republican Government." Bessette argues that the original purpose of the U.S. constitution was to "restrain popular majority, but also to effectuate majorities rule," and the reconciliation of these contradictory goals "lies in the framers' broad purpose to establish a 'deliberative democracy'."[9] Thus situating deliberation at the core of U.S. democracy. This is not to say there were no important contemporary works in deliberative democracy before 1980. Two of the most influential thinkers in deliberative democracy are Jürgen Habermas, whose critical democratic theory in *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* in 1962, and *Theory of Communicative Action* in 1981, sets

[9] Joseph Bessette, "Deliberative Democracy: The Majority Principle in Republican Government," in *How Democratic is the Constitution?*, ed. Robert Goldwin and William Shambra (Washington D.C.: American Enterprise Institute, 1980), 104.

up the public sphere as crucial for critical reflection on governmental power, as well as John Rawls, whose liberal approach in *A Theory of Justice* in 1979, reorients political theory to the Kantian vein with a focus on citizens arguing for principles of justice based on the 'original position'. Both of these thinkers are drawn upon in the creation of the deliberative works of the mid to late 1980s.[10] However, it is in their rejoinder with deliberative democracy, Habermas's *Between Facts and Norms*, and Rawls's *Political Liberalism*, that we see the early inspirers of deliberative democracy become the reinforcing backbone of it.[11] Due in large part to these two, today deliberative democracy is, according to John Dryzek, "the most active area of political theory in its entirety (not just democratic theory)."[12]

Theories of deliberative democracy see democratic legitimacy achieved through the process of public deliberation—the exchange of reasons between citizens along with thoughtful reflection and reciprocity. James Bohman explains that decisions made through the process of democratic deliberation are legitimate if each citizen is equal and their reasons are given equal consideration.[13] Dryzek says that political outcomes are legitimate "to the extent they receive

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[10] See John Bohman, *Public Deliberation: Pluralism, Complexity, and Democracy* (Boston: MIT Press, 1996); Joshua Cohen, "Deliberation and Democratic Legitimacy," in *The Good Polity*, ed. Alan Hamlin and Philip Pettit (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989); Jon Elster, *Sour Grapes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); and James Fishkin, *Democracy and Deliberation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991).

[11] Simone Chambers, "Deliberative Democratic Theory," *Annual Review of Political Science* 6 no. 1 (June 2003), 307-326. Chambers points out that Rawls endorses deliberation, and his idea of public reason is extremely influential in deliberative theories, he is not necessarily considered a deliberative democratic theorist.

[12] John S. Dryzek, "Theory, Evidence, and the Tasks of Deliberation," in *Deliberation, Participation and Democracy*, ed. S.W. Rosenberg (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

[13] John Bohman, "Deliberative Democracy and Effective Social Freedom: Capabilities, Resources, and Opportunities," in *Deliberative Democracy Essays on Reason and Politics*, ed. James Bohman and William Rehg, (Boston: MIT Press, 1997), 321.

reflective assent through participation in authentic deliberation by all those subject to the decision in question."[14] In some views of deliberative democracy, citizens offer reasons to each other in order to achieve a consensus on laws.[15] But consensus is not necessarily required for laws to be legitimate—the process of reason exchange itself can be what creates legitimacy.[16] For example, Simone Chambers claims accountability, in the sense of accounting for or giving reasons for public policy, "replaces consent as the conceptual core of legitimacy."[17] Similarly, Iris Young says democratic legitimacy "depends on the degree to which those affected by it have been included in the decision-making processes."[18]

Amy Gutmann and Dennis Thompson identify the four main characteristics of deliberative democracy. First and foremost is "its *reason-giving* requirement."[19] Citizens must exchange reasons with each other, reflect on those reasons, and reciprocate. The second and third characteristics are that debate must lead to a conclusion which is compulsory on the citizens and that the conclusion be revisable in the future. These two characteristics account for the

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[14] John S. Dryzek, *Foundations and Frontiers of Deliberative Governance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2010), 23.

[15] John Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005). Rawls expects citizens to strive to achieve "overlapping consensus."

[16] See Johnathan Quong, "Public Reason," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by Edward N. Zalta, (Winter 2017 Edition), forthcoming URL = https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2017/entries/public-reason/; Eric MacGilvray, *Reconstructing Public Reason* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), Ch. 6.

[17] Simone Chambers, "Deliberative Democratic Theory," *Annual Review of Political Science* 6 no. 1 (June 2003): 308.

[18] Iris Young, *Inclusion and Democracy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 5-6.

[19] Amy Gutmann and Dennis Thompson, *Why Deliberative Democracy?* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2004), 3.

progressive nature of democracy, which is to say, democracy must reflect the outcome of debate in a concrete and binding way but is also fluid and ever changing. The fourth characteristic is that reasons need to be public, which means reasons must be accessible to all citizens. Reasons must be accessible in two ways: reasons must be offered in debate in public venues, and reasons must be public in content, in other words, they cannot appeal to special knowledge (e.g. secular or religious revelation). Gerald Gaus emphasizes this point, saying that "only reasons that can be embraced by all of us are truly public, and hence justificatory."[20] This limitation on the types of reasons which can have justificatory force is especially challenging under conditions of deep pluralism, which is to say, a society that contains a wide array of conflicting moral, religious, and philosophical viewpoints. So, under these conditions, what qualifies a reason as being sufficiently public to be ethically used in deliberation? Much of the conversation in political theory for the last three decades has focused on this question to the point that many deliberative theories fall under the label of 'public reason liberalism'.

2.3 Public Reason Liberalism

This condition of 'public reason' for state legitimacy can be traced back through the social contract theories of Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau and Kant.[21] Recent formulations of public reason emphasize the required neutrality of public reasons. Reasons are neutral if they do not

[20] Gerald Gaus, "Reason, Justification, and Consensus: Why Democracy Can't Have it All," in *Deliberative Democracy*, ed James Bohman and William Rehg (Cambridge MA: The MIT Press, 1997), 205 – 242.

[21] Gerald Gaus, "Public Reason Liberalism," *The Cambridge Companion to Liberalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 112.

rely on or refer to any comprehensive doctrines. Thomas Nagel refers to his version of this neutrality requirement as ‘epistemological restraint’, that citizens have a moral duty to avoid “appeals to the truth.”[22] The rationale being, citizens in a deeply pluralistic society do not share conceptions of the truth and public reasons need to be shared and rely upon premises which anyone can reason from. This is an epistemological divide between the public and private, such that citizens are “constrained to consider [their] beliefs merely as beliefs rather than as truths” when engaging with others in the public sphere.[23]

Bruce Ackerman and Charles Larimore take a more pragmatic and less epistemological stance on the neutrality of public reasons. Ackerman argues that when citizens debate and realize they hold deep disagreements, they should use restraint and “say nothing about this disagreement and try to solve [the] problem by invoking premises that [they] do agree on.”[24] Similarly, Larimore says that “in the face of disagreement…retreat to *neutral ground*, with the hope of either resolving the dispute or bypassing it.”[25] Through restraint and retreat citizens who disagree can nonetheless keep the dialogue moving along and productive. Disagreement, in this practical sense, can have a detrimental effect on continued deliberation, thus, by finding common ground, the deliberative process stays productive.

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[22] Thomas Nagel, “Moral Conflict and Political Legitimacy,” *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 16 (1987): 227.

[23] Nagel, “Moral Conflict and Political Legitimacy,” 230.

[24] Bruce Ackerman, “Why Dialogue?” *Journal of Philosophy* 86, no. 1 (1989): 16-27.

[25] Charles Larimore, *Patterns of Moral Complexity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 53.

Joshua Cohen argues that citizens need to restrict reasons in public debate to “the subset of moral considerations that others who have reasonable views can accept as well.”[26] In this way citizens can avoid imposing their own moral views on other citizens. Each citizen can view themselves, not merely as a subject of the law, but an author of it. By limiting the deepness of public reason, staying on the surface, so to speak, citizens can protect the neutrality of the state. This is the liberal principle of neutrality. The idea that the state should not take sides. In deliberative democracy, the legitimacy of the state relies on the reasons being offered, so by offering neutral, public reasons, citizens prevent justifying the state on biased, deep grounds.

Furthermore, some versions of public reason equate public, neutral reasons with secular reasons. Robert Audi takes a particularly strong stance on the secularity of public reasons as a requirement of the separation of church and state. In his book *Democratic Authority and the Separation of Church and State*, Audi details three principles that this separation requires: the principle of religious liberty, equality of all religion, and governmental neutrality toward religion. These three principles protect the state from religious dogma and protect the religious liberty of the citizens by prohibiting establishment of religion in the state.[27]

To support the principle of government neutrality towards religion, Audi argues that public reasons should be secular reasons. If religious reasons are offered to justify laws and thereby religious justification enshrined in the state, then the state is no longer neutral. In order to

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[26] Joshua Cohen, “Moral Pluralism and Political Consensus,” in *The Idea of Democracy*, ed David Copp, Jean Hampton, and John Roemer, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

[27] Robert Audi, *Democratic Authority and the Separation of Church and State* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 39.

maintain a neutral state, public reasons must be secular. Audi proposes 'the principle of secular rationale' as a guiding rule for political deliberation. This principle states:

> Citizens in a democracy have a *prima facie* obligation not to advocate or support any law or public policy that restricts human conduct, unless they have, and are willing to offer, adequate secular reason for this advocacy or support (e.g. for a vote).[28]

He defines a secular reason as a justifying reason which does not rely on the existence of God, theological considerations, or (personal or institutional) religious authority.[29] This is an epistemic principle, which means it requires reasons not grounded on God, theology, or religious authority as evidence.

Of the varieties of public reason liberalism, John Rawls stands out as one of the most important advocates. It is worth taking an in-depth look at Rawls's wider project to set up the terms of the current debate over public reason and the role of religion, which will be the focus of the rest of this chapter.

2.4 Rawls and Public Reason Liberalism

The problem of deep pluralism is a challenge for classical liberal theories because in liberalism the state mainly exists to protect individual rights, so the use of coercive laws at any point must have a strong justification. The legitimacy of the coercive power of the state rests

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[28] Audi, *Democratic Authority and the Separation of Church and State*, 65.

[29] Audi, *Democratic Authority and the Separation of Church and State*, 67.

upon the consent of the governed, and to achieve that consent, citizens must agree to the reasons for which the coercive laws are enacted. However, when dealing with competing comprehensive worldviews, it becomes difficult to achieve consensus with respect to reasons for using such coercive state power. Each citizen brings their own reasons derived from their comprehensive worldview to the public sphere and in a pluralistic society, it is rare to find reasons upon which citizens can all agree. Furthermore, it is problematic when citizens bring reasons derived from their comprehensive worldviews to the public sphere. In liberal theories, the state is supposed to be neutral to comprehensive worldviews in the interest of fairness and equality to all citizens. If it is seen that the state has adopted a particular worldview *de facto*, then the state will not be able to justify coercive power to those citizens who do not ascribe to that view. The neutrality of the state is paramount to the legitimate use of coercive state power and this means citizens need to find reasons for the justification of coercive laws, which cannot be reasonably rejected by any reasonable citizen.

In *A Theory of Justice*, John Rawls outlines an approach to the problem of deep politics grounded in an idea of justice as fairness. He argues that if citizens imagine themselves behind a 'veil of ignorance', a situation where people are unaware of their race, gender, socio-economic status, capacities, or comprehensive worldview when making political decisions, citizens will choose laws which are fair to all. This 'original position' behind the veil justifies two principles of justice: first, the liberty principle, that all citizens ought to be afforded certain basic civil liberties, and second, the difference principle, that if inequality is to exist in society, it must be to the benefit of the least advantaged members. Basic liberties must not simply be formal, but must exist in practice, and this means a liberal conception of justice requires a social minimum. The

difference principle protects the liberty principle in practice by requiring this social minimum in the form of income and wealth.

In *Theory*, Rawls presents his conception of justice as a moral ideal, superior to the previously well accepted and widespread utilitarian moral-political theories. His Kantian approach relies on a form of moral constructivism. Rawls argues that people are autonomous and responsible agents because people have moral powers for practical reasoning.[30] This conception of justice as fairness has a practical role in society—it provides a basis for a justification of coercive laws through the medium of public debate. Citizens need not debate the metaphysics of moral truths, rather, citizens can come to an understanding of justice through the process of debate under idealized conditions.[31] By taking the original position behind the veil of ignorance citizens will come to agree on political conditions which are fair to all. By viewing citizens as autonomous and rational, Rawls assumes that citizens will come to a shared conception of justice as fairness through the process of debate. This moral view of justice is constructed through debate, and while not metaphysical, these moral principles are objectively valid.

In *Political Liberalism*, John Rawls points out a self-defeating feature of *Theory*, which is also shared with many other liberal theories of democracy—that in a society with a reasonable pluralism of comprehensive doctrines, any theory of democracy that is conjoined to any particular comprehensive doctrine can be reasonably rejected. Any moral justification for democracy can be reasonably rejected because a moral justification for democracy is itself a comprehensive doctrine. The moral conception of justice as fairness presented in *Theory* is

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[30] John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1999), 221-227.

[31] Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 118-122.

subject to the same possibility of reasonable rejection as any comprehensive doctrine. Rawls' conception of justice as fairness relies on the intrinsic good of human autonomy and the ideal conditions of rational deliberation. If the problem of deep pluralism is a problem of competing reasonable comprehensive doctrines, then imposing a comprehensive moral justification for democracy simply adds to the competition.

In *Political Liberalism*, Rawls revises his democratic theory into a "freestanding" theory. According to Rawls, this new conception of justice is only political and is not a comprehensive doctrine. He argues that where basic liberties are secured, diversity in comprehensive doctrines will "inevitably" rise, referring to this as the "fact of reasonable pluralism." [32] This diversity of comprehensive doctrines will be wide ranging, and there will be a multitude of comprehensive doctrines that are reasonable but also in disagreement with each other. Rawls responds to this challenge by arguing for a conception of democracy that allows each citizen to justify democracy in their own way. Whereas the moral justification for democracy in previous liberal theories places an unfair burden on citizens, Rawls now offers a theory that also allows a compatibility between reasonable comprehensive doctrines and democracy. Citizens can hold a reasonable comprehensive doctrine which justifies democracy in their own way, and allows for disagreement about the good, but nonetheless offers a way to legitimize the state. In this way citizens can all agree that state power is legitimate, but they can each hold their own views as to why this is the case. Rawls refers to this agreement as an "overlapping consensus."[33]

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[32] John Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 36-37.

[33] Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 15.

The overlapping consensus is the area in which citizens agree to basic principles of democracy albeit with different reasons derived from their comprehensive doctrines. To achieve an overlapping consensus, citizens must avoid discussing the deep underlying reasons for holding certain positions; citizens ought to work on finding middle ground between divisive positions. In this way, Rawls' political liberalism still proscribes moral obligations, but only insofar as it applies to citizenship. Citizens are morally obligated to respect each other and an important aspect of respecting other citizens during political deliberation requires citizens to offer reasons to each other which all citizens can reasonably accept. Overlapping consensus is the goal of deliberation, but there is also a moral obligation to attempt to reach this consensus. This political conception of justice requires that, as a matter of respect, citizens provide reasons to each other which other citizens can reasonably accept.[34] Rawls refers to this method of discourse as "public reason."[35]

Public reason applies to and constrains democratic deliberation in a general sense. It requires citizens to avoid drawing upon their comprehensive doctrines when engaging in political debate, legislating, and voting. The purpose is to keep unreasonable comprehensive doctrines from undermining justice and democratic legitimacy. If a particular reason is derived from a comprehensive doctrine, and not acceptable to other reasonable citizens, it does not belong in the public sphere. Privately, citizens are free to express their deeply held beliefs but publicly they ought not to share those beliefs. Sharing private beliefs leads to intractable disagreement and ultimately a loss of democratic legitimacy. The duty to offer public reasons is a duty of civility.

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[34] Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 218.

[35] Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 216.

Citizens are civil to one another when they show respect by offering reasons which are reasonably acceptable to other citizens.

The difference between public and private reasons is the ability for public justification. Public reasons are reasons which can be supported by public standards of inquiry. Inquiry that includes principles of reason and standards of evidence. Private reasons are such because those reasons do not stand up to public standards of inquiry. By offering private reasons in public settings, citizens are not genuinely attempting to deliberate, since their interlocutors are not able to accept those reasons. Public standards require debate based on widely accepted knowledge and common sense; not reasons based on insular information, like religious revelation. Offering reasons based on revelation, for example, does not show respect to fellow citizens because revelation is inaccessible to many citizens. While revelation may be a motivating factor to hold a political position, it is insufficient justification for voting or legislating for a political position.

Citizens are not required to use public reasons in all settings, but only when it comes to "constitutional essentials and matters of basic justice." Public reasons are not needed when discussing politics at the dinner table, but are required of public servants, like elected officials or judges, when advocating for policy in the legislature or making public announcements. Public reason is required of citizens when wielding political power, namely, when voting. Rawls says that citizens ought to think of themselves "*as if they were legislators*."[36] Citizens need to offer public reasons where necessary and hold government officials accountable for violating the ideals of public reason. Ultimately, there is a higher standard for government officials to uphold

[36] Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 444.

the ideal of public reason and a varying degree of constraint on citizens based on their role in public life.

A significant problem arises from Rawls's conception of public reason in regard to the role of religion in a liberal democracy. As citizens are required to leave their comprehensive doctrines at the door when entering the public sphere, it leaves those religiously inclined citizens at a significant disadvantage. Religion falls under the category of a comprehensive doctrine and religious citizens regularly draw from those doctrines when making political decisions. But religious reasons are not to be drawn from when voting or invoked when engaging in public deliberation because using religious reasons in either of these ways is disrespectful to citizens who are not citizens in that religion.

Rawls attempts to clarify his position on religious reasons in his essay "The Idea of Public Reason Revisited." He says that there is an important distinction between public reason and 'secular' reason. Secular reason is too broad a category and includes comprehensive, non-religious doctrines, which are still a violation of the idea of public reason. Liberal political values are not synonymous with secular values. According to Rawls, the liberal political conceptions of justice have three features: the principles apply to matters of social and political institutions, are independent of comprehensive doctrines, and can be assembled from fundamental ideas from the underlying political culture, such as citizens being free and equal. Rawls clarifies that citizens can in fact draw upon their comprehensive doctrines, religious or otherwise, and even introduce that doctrine, provided that "in due course, we give properly public reasons to support the

principles and policies our comprehensive doctrine is said to support."[37] Rawls refers to this caveat as the "proviso."[38]

The proviso offers a way for citizens to use reasons stemming from their comprehensive doctrines if citizens are willing to supplant those reasons with neutral, public reasons. The proviso allows citizens to use religious reasons as a sort of promissory note, an IOU, which says that religious reasons are a motivating factor for holding some political position, but justification using neutral, public reasons can or will be provided to support that position at some other time. Rawls is clear that public reasons are such because those reasons proceed "entirely within a political conception of justice," and that the political conceptions of public reason are "complete," meaning those values alone can "give a reasonable answer to all, or to nearly all, questions involving constitutional essentials and matters of basic justice."[39] While Rawls says that comprehensive doctrines are allowed in the public sphere, ultimately those reasons cannot do the justifying; public reasons need to stand alone and not be propped up artificially like "puppets manipulated from behind the scenes by comprehensive doctrines."[40] So religious reasons can be offered without being disrespectful to other citizens, but only because those reasons are not doing the actual job of justification.

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[37] Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 453.

[38] Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 453.

[39] Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 453-454.

[40] Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 454.

2.5 Critiques of Public Reason Liberalism

Despite Rawls's attempt to temper the criticisms of public reason and its relationship to religion, there is a wealth of literature that seeks to demonstrate that public reason is inherently exclusionary of religious voices. This list is far from comprehensive, but of these numerous criticisms, the following varieties specifically target public reason as it relates to religion. The categories are based in part on Patrick Neil's article, "Is Political Liberalism Hostile to Religion?," and Jonathan Quong's entry in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, "Public Reason."[41]

2.5.1 Fairness Objection

The fairness objection is based on the idea for which Rawls himself argues, that it is oppressive to favor one comprehensive moral doctrine over another. The charge in this objection is that public reason is effectively doing just that. By requiring religious persons to keep their real reasons out of the public debate, it creates an unfair imbalance since secular persons are more likely to offer the types of reasons required by public reason anyway.

Christopher Eberle argues that there are two commitments at the core of justificatory liberalism, the 'principle of pursuit', that all citizens ought to pursue public justification for coercive laws, and the 'doctrine of restraint', a citizen should not support any coercive law if that

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[41] Patrick Neal, "Is Political Liberalism Hostile to Religion?," in *Reflections on Rawls*, ed. Shaun P. Young (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing, 2009); Johnathan Quong, "Public Reason," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by Edward N. Zalta, (Winter 2017 Edition), forthcoming URL = https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2017/entries/public-reason/.

person lacks a public justification for it. Justificatory liberalism makes the mistake of conflating these two commitments by assuming that the doctrine of pursuit leads directly to the doctrine of restraint. Eberle argues that this is not the case. A citizen ought to pursue public justification for their views; however, if that attempt fails, it should not require the citizen to instead stay silent.[42]

The issue here is accessibility. If a reason is to be sufficiently 'public' it must be more than simply intelligible to others; it must be 'accessible'. To show respect to all other citizens, a citizen must attempt to find a public justification for their view, and to be a public justification, a reason must be publicly accessible. Accessibility in this case means that other people are not only able to understand the content of the reason, but the reason must be something other people can reasonably accept. Yet, religious reasons are generally not publicly accessible, if accessibility means what Eberle calls "*in principle* public accessibility."[43] A reason is in principle publicly accessible if it is possible (if not actually the case) for a citizen to understand and evaluate the reason. This reason cannot be a matter of special knowledge, where only certain people with certain capacities can understand the reason, it must be available to all, in principle. If religious reasons are not in principle accessible to all, then those reasons cannot be publicly justifiable and are therefore reasons that cannot be used ethically in public debate.

Eberle disagrees with the conclusion that if a citizen earnestly attempts to offer a justification for their position, in other words, follows the doctrine of pursuit, but fails to offer reasons that are in principle accessible, that the citizens must then stay silent. The doctrine of

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[42] Christopher Eberle, *Religious Conviction in Liberal Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 255-260.

[43] Eberle, *Religious Conviction in Liberal Politics*, 258.

restraint implies the doctrine of pursuit, but the doctrine of pursuit does not imply the doctrine of restraint, so these two doctrines are separate, despite being conflated by justificatory liberals. Eberle agrees that there is an obligation to pursue public reasons, but not an obligation to stay silent if those reasons are not ultimately in principle accessible. He says, "the principle of pursuit requires *nothing* more than a sincere and conscientious aspiration to public justification… [but] the principle of pursuit is silent regarding whether a citizen may support a given law on the basis of her religious convictions alone."[44] The doctrine of restraint as well does not take a stance on whether or not a religious reason is allowed or forbidden in the public sphere. If it is the case that a citizen has a public justification for any given law, then it does not matter if the citizen is more motivated by religious reasons than by the public reasons "since the doctrine of restraint requires only that a citizen withhold her support from any coercive law for which she lacks a public justification."[45]

Another aspect of this objection is that the obligations imposed on religious citizens may be asymmetric to their secular counterparts. It may not be equitable to ask religious persons to only appeal to independent sources when their own reasons are very much grounded in what Patrick Neal refers to as "extensive narrative content," in other words, stories based on sacred scripture.[46] Religious reasons may be significantly more difficult to separate from their narratives than secular reasons from secular worldviews. Wolterstorff argues that there are two

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[44] Eberle, *Religious Conviction in Liberal Politics*, 75.

[45] Eberle, *Religious Conviction in Liberal Politics*, 76.

[46] Patrick Neal, "Is Political Liberalism Hostile to Religion?," in *Reflections on Rawls*, ed. Shaun P. Young (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing, 2009).

ways in which it is not equitable to make this request. First, it is a matter of religious conviction that citizens of faith should base their decisions on their faith, "they do not view it as an option whether or not to do so."[47] Religion is not something outside of a political commitment, politics are instead within their religious worldview. Second, while it is relatively clear when citizens are basing their decisions on religious commitments because of the language they use, determining the use of commitments to secular worldviews is much more difficult. How are we to know when citizens offering reason from a Utilitarian or nationalist comprehensive worldview are doing so? [48] Furthermore, natural law theorists Robert George and Christopher Wolfe argue that the liberal position is favored by virtue of the requirements of public reason. The liberal position is acceptable in moral arguments because the nonliberal positions are preemptively ruled "out of bounds."[49] Public reason promotes the liberal moral view before the debate over political values even begins.

2.5.2 Integrity Objection

One of the most persuasive criticisms of public reason liberalism is the claim that it requires people to separate their real reasons from their public reasons, thus creating a challenge to the integrity of the person. This is particularly challenging for the theist, many of whom

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[47] Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Religion in the Public Square* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 1997), 105.

[48] Wolterstorff, *Religion in the Public Square*, 105.

[49] Robert George and Christopher Wolfe, *Natural Law and Public Reason*, (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2000), 2.

believe that their religious beliefs ought to permeate throughout all of their decisions and political obligations. Religious existence is therefore not something separate from political existence. To ask a religious citizen to bracket religious belief when entering into the public sphere, public reason is asking citizens to act contrary to their moral beliefs, asks people to act disingenuously and requires something which, in practice, may be impossible.

Nicholas Wolterstorff makes a convincing case for the integrity objection. He argues that citizens of faith may see a duty to base their public decisions on their religious beliefs as a matter of justice. "It belongs to the *religious convictions* of a good many religious people in our society that *they ought to base* their decisions concerning fundamental issues of justice on their religious convictions. They do not view it as an option whether or not to do so."[50] Religion informs their duty as citizens and separating religious beliefs from political duty is simply not an option. Similarly, Christopher Eberle argues that religious persons will "take their obligation to obey God to extend to the political realm."[51] People will hold certain political positions for religious reasons but then publicly justify those positions by offering different reasons, which forces them to conceal their real reasons. Beyond being an unfair burden to religious persons, public reason is asking them to do something which is unethical in two ways. First, public reason is asking people to act unethically by requiring them to disobey their religious/moral commitments to inform their political beliefs with their faith. Second, public reason asks citizens to act unethically by divorcing their real reasons from public reason thus hiding their true motivations.

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[50] Nicholas Wolterstorff and Robert Audi, *Religion in the Public Square* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 1997), 105.

[51] Eberle, *Religious Conviction in Liberal Politics*, 145.

Moreover, moral and religious convictions are constitutive of one's personal identity and in asking people to suppress these convictions, public reason may be asking the impossible. Michael Perry argues that to "'bracket' such convictions is therefore to bracket—to annihilate—essential aspects of one's very self."[52] Habermas agrees, saying that "many religious citizens would not be able to undertake such an artificial division within their own minds without jeopardizing their existence as pious persons."[53] Religious/moral commitments are pervasive throughout a person's identity and requiring people to separate their political reasons from their personal identity is simply asking too much.

2.5.3 Denial of Truth Objection

Public reason denies truth because it requires citizens to keep their real reasons a secret from public life, which is both oppressive and leads to dishonest reasons in the public sphere. There are three ways this objection takes root. First, public reason values reasonableness over truth, seeing social cooperation as a better good than the contents of any sectarian belief. Second, it is epistemically exclusionary and ignores certain beliefs simply because of where those beliefs originate. Third, public reason asks people to hide their real reasons as a matter of showing respect to fellow democratic citizens, but it may be the case that in offering honest, albeit private reasons, one does show respect.

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[52] Michael Perry, *Morality, Politics, and Law* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 181-182.

[53] Jürgen Habermas, "Religion in the Public Sphere," *European Journal of Philosophy* 14, no. 1 (April 2006): 8.

Public reason values reasonableness over truth insofar as public reason asks people to offer only reasons that other people could reasonably accept, regardless of whether or not those reasons are the very best reasons. Michael Sandel argues that it may not be reasonable to ask citizens to bracket their comprehensive doctrines. In asking citizens to bracket these concerns, it implies that there will be no concern arising from comprehensive doctrines which outweighs the good of ensuring social cooperation through public-private identity separation. By placing the political value of social cooperation above any concern arising from a comprehensive doctrine, Sandel argues, Rawls is denying that "any of the moral or religious conceptions it brackets could be true."[54] This skepticism is what Rawls is trying to avoid in political liberalism. He is not trying to deny the moral truths of comprehensive doctrines, rather, in bracketing the possible truths of comprehensive doctrines, the political is the area where competing views are debated in relation to justice and not in relation to their epistemic character. Politics should not be the arena of theological or moral debates about truth. Yet, in bracketing the private identities of citizens, political liberalism ignores possible truths which may morally outweigh the political values of social cooperation. If it is the case that there is some moral truth, then it seems to stand that holding such a belief would be reasonable. Sandel offers the example of abortion and says "if the Catholic Church is right about the moral status of the fetus, if abortion is tantamount to murder, then it is not clear why the political values of toleration and women's equality, important though they are, should prevail."[55] Political liberalism must take a skeptical stance on the possibility of

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[54] Michael Sandel, *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice: Second Edition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 197.

[55] Sandel, *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice: Second Edition*, 198.

this moral truth but the morality of the status of a fetus is not something which can or should be bracketed in such a debate. Political liberalism argues that the state should be neutral on the subject because people disagree about it, ignoring the possibility of a moral truth. Political liberalism attempts to walk a tightrope between supporting the basic liberties of freedom of speech and freedom of religion along with the moral requirement of public reason to avoid employing religious reasons in public speech as sole justification for policies. Yet without public deliberation, Sandel argues, it is impossible to "test the plausibility of contending comprehensive moralities – to persuade others of the merits of our moral ideals, to be persuaded by others of the merits of theirs."[56]

Public reason is epistemically exclusionary when it forbids reasons that originate in non-public arenas. Robert Talisse points out that political liberalism is not rejecting the position of the comprehensive doctrine of the Thomist, for example, but rather the reasons stemming from that doctrine. He argues that "public reason cannot recognize a Thomist's reasons *as* reasons" and "even an irrefutable proof of the Thomistic doctrine of ensoulment is insufficient to render reasonable a Catholic's public opposition to abortion,"[57] This is because the proof of the truth of any given position does not necessarily prove the untruth of other competing reasonable doctrines. The truth of the fact of reasonable pluralism is not asserted by political liberalism, because to do so would be to violate the freestanding nature of the theory. Talisse concludes that public reason is therefore "*epistemically* exclusionary" because it cannot "acknowledge the

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[56] Sandel, *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice: Second Edition*, 211.

[57] Robert Talisse, *Democracy and Moral Conflict* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 55.

epistemic force of the arguments" made which may counter the limits of public reason and "cannot give *reasons why* such arguments should be discredited."[58] Public reason can only respond with the argument that when we offer positions which cover the entire truth, we are violating the spirit of social cooperation necessary of a modern democracy, which Talisse says, simply begs the question. Political liberalism here is making an implicit association of truth with zealotry. Reasons stemming from comprehensive doctrines are rejected out of principle, without regard to the epistemic merits of those reasons. Citizens must reject the possibility that these reasons are true and that those reasons could offer justificatory force in the public sphere. The assumption here is that the stability of society is better preserved by ignoring the possible truths of reasons in favor of public reasoning.

In *Democracy and Tradition*, Jeffrey Stout says that asking people to offer disingenuous public reasons does not show respect to fellow citizens in a democracy. Instead, Stout argues that we ought to practice what he calls 'immanent criticism'. Engaging fellow citizens in debate on their own terms allows for an honest exchange of reasons, which does show respect to fellow citizens. Stout is motivated by the increasingly tense relationship between citizens of faith and democratic politics. He sees the Rawlsian conception of public reason as exacerbating an emerging pragmatic problem, that democracy asks citizens to vote and advocate for their interests and claims to value freedom of religion, but public reason limits their ability to honestly do either. The burden of public reason falls unequally on citizens of faith who have a harder time expressing their true political beliefs in public deliberation than their secular counterparts, and so

[58] Talisse, *Democracy and Moral Conflict*, 55.

public reason simply looks like a way to keep citizens of faith out of the debate. This leads those citizens to view democratic politics as hypocritical, which creates “resentment” in citizens of faith and leads to further enclave communities.[59]

Stout agrees with Rawls that citizens should all strive to share their reasons for advocating political positions to show fairness and respect for one’s fellow citizens. However, in requiring citizens to avoid using any reasons that other citizens could reasonably reject, Stout says public reason requires that citizens “be reasonable in the Rawlsian sense… to accept the need for a social contract and to be willing to reason on the basis of it.”[60] This implies unreasonableness on the part of anyone who rejects this contractarian basis, even if they have good reasons for rejecting this common justificatory project as “morally unnecessary and epistemologically dubious.”[61] Whereas Rawls sees this common justificatory basis as plausible, Stout does not.

Stout instead argues that people can be reasonable by being socially cooperative without accepting Rawls’s argument for a free-standing conception of justice. Rawls asks citizens to place themselves behind the veil of ignorance and detach themselves from their comprehensive doctrines, but, Stout argues, the difficulty in this type of approach is that it overestimates “what can be resolved in terms of the imagined common basis of justifiable principles” and underestimates the “role of a person’s collateral commitments in determining what he or she can

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[59] Jeffery Stout, *Democracy and Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 10.

[60] Stout, *Democracy and Tradition*, 67.

[61] Stout, *Democracy and Tradition*, 67.

reasonably reject when deciding basic political questions."[62] Rawls allows drawing on these commitments for lesser political matters, but not when it comes to matters of basic justice and constitutional essentials. But why should important personal values be left out when it comes to such important matters? Here Rawls is prioritizing the right over the good, but Stout believes this is exactly the sort of thing over which reasonable people would disagree. It seems reasonable to assume that some people would have personal commitments that both allow them to be socially cooperative, but also value collateral commitments as more important than the requirements of the contractarian project. If Rawls is defining reasonableness as a commitment to the contractarian project, then he is begging the question. Why is it that the contractarian project of establishing a common basis is not something reasonable people can reject? Stout says that there appears to be "sound *epistemological* reasons for rejecting the quest for a common basis, reasons rooted in the permissive notion of epistemic entitlement that lends plausibility to the doctrine of reasonable pluralism in the first place."[63] If it is the case that people are acting epistemically responsible, then it seems reasonable to say that those people may be able to reasonably reject the contractarian basis on epistemic grounds.

Moreover, how can it be fair to require silence on an issue when it is the case that citizens of faith are not in a position to offer secular reasons in place of, or to back up their religious reasons? Stout disagrees with Rawls that offering religious reasons is inherently disrespectful. He says this view of respect "neglects the ways in which one can show respect for another

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[62] Stout, *Democracy and Tradition*, 70.

[63] Stout, *Democracy and Tradition*, 71.

person in his or her particularity."[64] If a citizen holds certain religious reasons to support a political position, then explains those reasons honestly, engages in a conversation on the matter, taking objections seriously, and attempts to show the interlocutor why they might hold premises which support the religious reasons, then, Stout says, there should be no reason to see this as a form of disrespect despite not involving reasons based on principles which no reasonable citizen could reasonably reject.[65]

2.5.4 Anti-Democratic Objection

Public reason is exclusionary since it requires citizens to omit certain reasons from public debate and several critics view this requirement of omission as anti-democratic. Radical democrats, Iris Young, Seyla Benhabib, and Nancy Frasier argue that public reason is anti-democratic because it favors the status quo.[66] By requiring a 'proper' political language, public reason limits the ability of nontraditional reasons to make democratic change. Benhabib argues that "all struggles against oppression in the modern world begin by redefining what had previously been considered private, nonpublic, and nonpolitical…"[67] If public reason limits critical debate then it favors the status quo and interferes with democratic debate. Habermas

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[64] Stout, *Democracy and Tradition*, 72.

[65] Stout, *Democracy and Tradition*, 72.

[66] Iris Young, *Inclusion and Democracy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Seyla Benhabib, *Situating the Self* (New York: Routledge, 1996); Nancy Frazier, "Rethinking the Public Sphere," in *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, ed. Craig Calhoun (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992).

[67] Seyla Benhabib, *Situating the Self* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 82.

agrees that public reasons prioritizes liberal rights “which demotes the democratic process to an inferior status.”[68]

Sandel suggests that by excluding religious reasons, public reason is antidemocratic because it reduces the vitality of public, democratic debate. When citizens are forced to bracket their religious and moral views, the political discourse of a society becomes disenchanted. In the case of the United States, Sandel argues that the naked public sphere becomes clothed with “narrow, intolerant moralisms” and ‘fundamentalists rush in where liberals fear to tread.”[69] Political liberalism’s “vision of public reason is too spare to contain the moral energies of a vital democratic life.”[70] Without a robust public discourse people become focused on petty vices of politicians, scandal, and the sensational. Public reason leaves the public sphere empty which ultimately invites illiberal voices to fill it. Moreover, it may be the case that a public sphere with deeper convictions will lead to a healthier democracy. Sandel argues that a better conception of respect, rather than omitting and ignoring the underlying motivations of citizens, is to “respect our fellow citizen’s moral and religious convictions by engaging or attending to them – sometimes by challenging and contesting them, sometimes by listening and learning from

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[68] Jürgen Habermas, “Reconciliation Through the Public use of Reason: Remarks on John Rawls’s Political Liberalism,” *The Journal of Philosophy* 92, no. 3: 109–131.

[69] Michael Sandel, *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice: Second Edition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 217.

[70] Michael Sandel, *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice: Second Edition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 217.

them."[71] A pluralistic society should embrace the diversity of opinions rather than silencing them.

2.5.5 Incomplete and Self-defeating Objection

Micah Schwartzman and Ken Greenawalt each argue that public reason is incomplete because it simply cannot offer determinate answers to social problems.[72] In practice, public reason is incomplete, if the view of public reason is that it is meant to offer answers to solve problems. Schwartzman argues that public reason may be inconclusive in two ways. First, that it is indeterminate, which means that public reason simply cannot offer enough of an answer to political problems. Suppose a solution reached by way of public reasons is insufficient, but sufficient answers come from non-public reasons, then public reason's requirements effectively block the proper answer to a problem. Public reason cannot determine an answer. As inconclusive, public reason offers a framework for answering these problems, but leaves the door open for a plurality of answers. In this sense public reason cannot offer conclusive answers to problems, since many conflicting answers may arise from public debate. There are a number of moral issues in public life that without deeper debate will fail to be conclusively answered, such

[71] Michael Sandel, *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice: Second Edition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 217.

[72] Micah Schwartzman, "The Completeness of Public Reason," *Politics, Philosophy, and Economics* 3, no. 2 (May 2004): 191-220; Kent Greenawalt, *Religious Convictions and Political Choice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988).

as same-sex marriage, abortion, and animal rights. These sorts of problems may never be conclusively resolved without the appeal to comprehensive doctrines.

Other critics of public reason argue that the requirement of public reason to avoid using reasons reasonable people could reject leads to the self-defeat of public reason. This is because many reasonable people do in fact reject public reason. David Enoch, Steven Wall, and Franz Mang argue that public reason is a moral rule and like all moral rules it can be reasonably rejected.[73] If under the requirements of public reason, public reasons need to be justifiable to all persons, then public reason itself cannot meet its own requirements.

2.5.6 Postsecular Objection

Running concurrently with the public reason debate is a discussion regarding the concept of secularism—a debate which has foremost challenged the sociological thesis that secularization accompanies modernization. This investigation has resulted in a widespread rejection of the idea that secularism is, as Charles Taylor explains, "a condition of 'having overcome' the irrationality of belief."[74] Jürgen Habermas, who has a lengthy history engaging with Rawls on the topic of deliberative democracy, recently turned his attention to the role of religion in the public sphere and notably added to the development of this critique of secularism.

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[73] David Enoch, "The Disorder of Public Reason," *Ethics* 124, no. 1 (October 2013): 141–176; Steven Wall, "Is Public Justification Self-Defeating?," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 39, no. 4, (October 2002): 385-394.

[74] Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2007), 269.

While not the first to use the term, Habermas has popularized the term ‘postsecular’ to refer to a more accepting approach to the use of religious reasons in the public sphere. Habermas’s ‘postsecular turn’ marks an important change in the focus of the debate on religion and public reason. This change involves the recognition that the use of religious reasons may provide sufficient benefits to public deliberation to warrant inclusion in some form or another. It also places public reason in a historicized context within a sociological theory of modernity.

Habermas argues the public consciousness of modern societies can be described as ‘post-secular’ because of three phenomena. First, the prevalence of a rise in global fundamentalism, which demonstrates the lack of a connection between modernization and secularization. Second, the increasing influence of religion on national issues, such as abortion and marriage, which in many cases set the debate stage. Third, the influx of immigrants from countries with more religious traditionalist backgrounds.[75] A society is postsecular if it is a modern society with a secular government where religion has been relegated more to the private domain,

Habermas presents the postsecular as a challenge to the Rawlsian conception of public reason by both asserting the usefulness of religious reasons in deliberation and rejecting the characterization of religious reasons as irrational. He says the state has an interest in allowing religious reasons in public debate because in prohibiting those reasons, it may cut off “key resources for the creation of meaning and identity,” for example, when secular citizens “recognize buried intuitions of their own in the normative truth contents of a religious

[75] Jürgen Habermas, “Notes on a Post-secular Society,” *New Perspectives Quarterly*, 25, no. 4 (Fall 2008): 20.

utterance."[76] Habermas believes religion can uniquely express moral intuitions and without this tool in the public's toolbox, secular citizens, and public debate as a whole, will suffer from a lack of this articulation.

Unlike other criticisms of public reason, Habermas is not trying to point out the internal inconsistencies of the theory of public reason, he is trying to make public reason less freestanding and more historically aware.[77] If it is the case that the secular thesis is incorrect, then religion will continue to persevere in old and new forms. Public reason should be responsive to these changing forms of life in modern society. By focusing on an idealized theory of public reason, we ignore today's problems and public reason becomes ineffective.

2.6 Conclusion

These objections demonstrate serious flaws to the requirement of public reason when considering the challenge of reasonable pluralism. Some theorists have responded to these critiques by digging-in and defending the value of public reason despite its exclusionary nature. Stephen Macedo draws such a line, asserting that "if some people nevertheless feel 'silenced' or 'marginalized' by the fact that some of us believe that it is wrong to seek to shape basic liberties on the basis of religious or metaphysical claims, I can only say 'grow up!'"[78] While Macedo is

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[76] Jürgen Habermas, *Between Naturalism and Religion*, trans. Ciaran Cronin (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008), 131.

[77] Roberto Frega, "Equal Accessibility to All: Habermas, Pragmatism, and the Place of Religious Beliefs in a Post-Secular Society," *Constellations* 19, no. 2 (June 2012): 267.

[78] Stephen Macedo, "In Defense of Liberal Public Reason: are Slavery and Abortion Hard Cases?," *The American Journal of Jurisprudence* 42, no 1 (January 1997): 21, https://doi-org.ccl.idm.oclc.org/10.1093/ajj/42.1.1.

right that democratic citizens must at times compromise on policies, the force of this position still lies in the assumption that religious reasons should not be the justificatory basis for laws.

However, there are other avenues for democratic justification that can include religious reasons in public debate which do not rely directly on those religious reasons to do the justifying. Advocates of public reasons argue that it is unethical to use religious or other reasons stemming from comprehensive doctrines in public justification but making such a claim relies on a conception of political morality that is itself a comprehensive moral doctrine. This is a challenge for any conception of democratic justification founded on moral commitments – it is likely there will always be a reasonable disagreement as to which moral view of justification is authoritative, thus moral justifications for democracy will likely fail. But moral justifications of democracy are not the only option.

In the following chapter, I will discuss alternative approaches to the justification of democracy based on epistemic rather than moral commitments. These epistemic approaches are widely variant when it comes to what exactly does the justifying, some finding justification in the epistemic value of democratic outcomes, others in the epistemic virtues of democracy (or both). Epistemic theories are a promising approach to justification considering reasonable pluralism because these theories generally find epistemic diversity, including religious perspectives, as useful to democratic deliberation. Of these theories, I argue the Peircean epistemic defense is the most promising option because it avoids the problem of exclusion and offers sufficient reason for democratic citizens to stay committed to democracy based on epistemic commitments shared by all.

Chapter Three: The Epistemic Turn

3.1 Introduction

In deliberative theories of democracy, democratic outcomes are justified through the exchange of reasons and these reasons should be acceptable to all (at least ideally, if not in practice). However, under democratic conditions society will likely lead to a growing plurality of comprehensive doctrines, what John Rawls calls the 'fact of reasonable pluralism', and this fact creates a challenge for democratic justification.[79] If reasons stemming from one comprehensive doctrine provide the justification for some coercive law, those who do not share that comprehensive doctrine can reasonably reject the justificatory basis of that law and therefore the law itself. This is a paradox of democratic justification—democracy requires some widely held agreement for justification, but if democracy is successful, it will lead to less agreement and justification fails.

Rawls offers a theory of justification that addresses this problem, arguing that, as a matter of ethical citizenship, people ought to deliberate using 'public reasons' – reasons that all people can reasonably accept.[80] Public reasons are reasons that do not directly rely on the truth of any one worldview but rather on the reasonableness of the proposal. By removing truth from deliberation, the debate stays 'on the surface' where people can find an 'overlapping consensus'

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[79] Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 63.

[80] Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 10.

and wide agreement. This avoids the problem of any one group imposing an oppressive worldview on others and instead creates a justification that is acceptable to all. However, the drawback to public reason is that many who want to participate in the deliberative process are *de facto* excluded from debate because they are either unable to separate their truth-based reasons from their public reasons or they only have truth-based reasons. This is an acute concern for religious citizens who may be excluded from democracy at-large. Moreover, the requirement of public reason imposes a controversial moral burden on some and can therefore be reasonably rejected.

Where does this leave the project of democratic justification? If truth-based reasons are used in deliberation, those who can reasonably reject these reasons will be oppressed and justification fails, but the imposition of certain pre-deliberative, normative requirements (such as public reason) can also be oppressive to the individual and justification fails. Ideally, a successful theory of democratic justification should offer a substantial account of democratic norms, practices, and institutions without imposing substantive normative restrictions on citizens (such as excluding truth-based reasons in deliberation) and still avoid one conception of truth being imposed on all. But is such a theory possible?

In this chapter, I examine several recent attempts to reintroduce truth into democratic justification, a trend many refer to as the 'epistemic turn' in democracy. This turn not only challenges the assumption that truth is detrimental to justification but offers compelling reasons to believe that including truth is beneficial to democratic deliberation. Correctness theories highlight democracy's epistemic power to track truth and find good answers to social problems. Building on the insights of the correctness approaches, Cohen's modified Rawlsian approach demonstrates that truth, or at least an objective aim, is inherent in deliberation and thus

unavoidable. Estlund's epistemic proceduralism brings the 'whole truth' into justification and relies on the likelihood of democratic procedures reaching correct outcomes to support the legitimacy of democratic authority. The Deweyan view highlights the dynamic and constructive aspects of democracy as a process of social inquiry that views democratic ideals as hypotheses to be tested.

I conclude that the Peircean epistemic defense (PED) is the most promising epistemic theory to forward the justificatory project. The PED views democracy as a process of social inquiry where reasons are exchanged and tested through deliberation. Truth is therefore vital to democracy insofar as the purpose of democratic deliberation is to create solutions to social problems. Moreover, democracy is vital to truth insofar as the ability to hold true beliefs entails the epistemic requirement of an open society in which to discover truth. Recognizing this interdependence, the PED demonstrates that our commitment to truth entails our commitment to democracy. Therefore, the PED offers a substantial account of democracy while avoiding the imposition of oppressive normative commitments that can be reasonably rejected.

3.2 Democratic Justification and Legitimacy

In deliberative theories of democracy, there are generally two approaches to creating democratic legitimacy: proceduralist and substantive.[81] Proceduralists see legitimacy stemming

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[81] A. John Simmons, "Justification and Legitimacy," *Ethics* 109, no. 4 (1999), doi:10.1086/233944. Justification and legitimacy are regularly considered part of the same project—a state has legitimate authority to use coercive power if that use if justified; however, Simmons points out that these terms can refer to a variety of different issues. For the sake of this paper, I use the terms in this first general sense and identify instances where a distinction is necessary.

from the fairness of democratic procedures while substantivists see legitimacy arising from the outcomes of debate. The paradigmatic proceduralist account comes from Joseph Schumpeter who defines democracy in both minimalist and realist terms. He describes democracy as an "institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people's vote."[82] For him, democracy is a way to solve disagreement in a factual way. Those who get the most votes win. According to Brian Barry, a proceduralist account of democracy does not place "constraints on the content of the outcomes produced, such as substantive equality, respect for human rights, concern for the general welfare, personal liberty or the rule of law."[83] Democracy is purely aggregative, adding up the preferences of the majority to determine the outcome. Other proceduralists see an intrinsic value to democratic procedures beyond the aggregative ability to settle political disputes. Charles Beitz argues for a 'fair' proceduralism, which goes beyond equal voting to equal consideration of individual interests.[84] Joshua Cohen goes further by adding to the requirement of fairness the conditions of freedom, equality, and rationality. Highlighting the deliberative importance of procedures, Cohen says that democratic outcomes are legitimate "if and only if they could be the object of a free and reasoned agreement among equals."[85] Saffon and Urbinati posit equal

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[82] Joseph Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy* (New York: Harper Books, 1962), 269.

[83] Brian Barry, "Is Democracy Special?," in *Philosophy, Politics, Society*, ed. Peter Laslett and James S. Fishkin (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), 166.

[84] Charles R. Beitz, *Political Equality: An Essay in Democratic Theory* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1989).

[85] Joshua Cohen, "Deliberation and Democratic Legitimacy," in *Deliberative Democracy: Essays on Reason and Politics*, ed. John Bohman and William Rehg (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997), 73.

political liberty as "the most important good for which democracy should strive," and argue that democratic procedures entail substantive commitments to "protecting civil, political, and basic social rights with the aim of ensuring a meaningful equal participation."[86]

Substantive theories of democracy are concerned with the quality of the outcomes of deliberation. Substantivists find legitimacy in the outcomes of deliberation if those outcomes uphold some procedure-independent standard. Whereas proceduralists believe fairness in the procedure is enough to justify democracy, substantivists respond that if outcomes do not uphold certain values, such as fairness and equality, then those outcomes are not sufficiently democratic. If a fair procedure leads to unfair outcomes, then the substantivist claims the procedure is insufficient, for example, Ronald Dworkin argues that outcomes must be just to justify democracy.[87] Rawls and Habermas value procedures but agree that procedures alone are insufficient for justification. Rawls was concerned that a Schumpeterian, realist view of democracy simply places citizens in a *modus vivendi*. This is an insufficient arrangement for democracy because each competing party is only concerned with their own interests and "social unity is only apparent."[88] Rather, citizens ought to deliberate to find a common good. Habermas makes the point that political debate implies that some reasons are better than others, otherwise what is the point of having political debate in the first place? So, he argues for outcomes to require some assurance of quality, and that deliberation ought to reach for a "rationally

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[86] Maria Paula Saffon and Nadia Urbinati, "Procedural Democracy, the Bulwark of Equal Liberty," *Political Theory* 41, no. 3 (June 2013): 442. doi:10.1177/0090591713476872.

[87] Ronald Dworkin, *Freedom's Law: The Moral Reading of the American Constitution* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1996).

[88] Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 147.

motivated consensus."[89] Other substantivists, such as J. S. Mill and John Dewey, view democracy as deeper than a system of procedures, but rather as a 'way of life'. Both argue that democracy offers a necessary freedom, but that freedom is not an end-in-itself, instead, it is the condition that leads to the greater goal of human flourishing.[90] Democracy has a distinct moral goal of human development. Dewey viewed democracy as a "mode of associated life" where citizens work collaboratively to solve social problems to create conditions for human flourishing. The difference between proceduralism and substantivism can be obscured at times due to the varying levels of substantive commitments inherent in proceduralist and substantive approaches, and part of the confusion is in the terminology. A theory may be described as 'substantive' in two ways that bear on this discussion. First, a theory can be substantive insofar as it places justificatory import on democratic outcomes rather than procedures, i.e., substantive rather than procedural. Second, theories that require significant normative commitments can be described as substantive (e.g., Rawls requires the moral duty of civility between citizens). The various uses of 'substantive' can be confusing because some proceduralist theories have significant substantive normative commitments and some substantive theories have very few substantive normative commitments. There are cases where proceduralists defend substantive normative commitments and cases where proceduralists argue that substantive-outcome theories are not substantive enough. To avoid and terminological confusion, I will follow others and refer to theories that

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[89] Jürgen Habermas, *Moral Consciousness and Communicative* Action (Cambridge, MA.: MIT Press, 1990), 68-82.

[90] John Dewey, *The Collected Works of John Dewey, 1882-1953*, Electronic Edition, edited by Jo Ann Boydston and Larry Hickman (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1967-1991), LW 14:226; John Stuart Mill and Alan Ryan, *Mill: Texts, Commentaries* (New York: W.W. Norton), 1997.

involve substantive normative commitments as 'thick' and refer to theories that have few normative commitments as 'thin'. In other words, there are thick and thin proceduralist accounts and thick and thin substantive accounts.

The challenge of democratic justification is essentially the difficulty in balancing thick and thin. When a theory is too thick, it is likely to offer a robust conception of democracy but impose normative standards on democratic citizens that can be reasonably rejected—in this case democracy is defended but justification for all fails. Likewise, a thin theory with few normative commitments avoids imposing oppressive commitments on citizens but fails to offer a sufficient account of why democratic outcomes have legitimacy or why one should choose democracy over another system of government. In the following section, my concern is to determine whether epistemic theories can navigate the balance of thick and thin.

3.3 Correctness Theories

Truth has fallen out of favor in political philosophy, which is understandable considering truth-talk can lead to claims of infallibility and other dangerous attitudes. Objectivist or realist assertions regarding the ultimate nature of reality have epistemic flaws, and, as Rawls points out, in the political and moral realm these claims create problems for political justification and threaten democracy.[91] Nonetheless, recently there has been an 'epistemic turn' in deliberative

[91] John Rawls, "The Domain of the Political and Overlapping Consensus," *New York University Law Review* 64, no. 2 (May 1989): 233-255; Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 2005.

democracy, and truth has reemerged in a central role in democratic justification.[92] The turn begins within a Rawlsian framework in the 1980s with Joshua Cohen's essay, "An Epistemic Conception of Democracy," and further developed by David Estlund in "The Epistemic Dimension of Democratic Authority."[93] Cohen formalizes the epistemic dimensions of democracy into a distinct epistemic approach and defends the possibility of a "procedure independent standard of correct decisions," like an account of justice or the public good, e.g., Rawls's requirements of "equal basic liberties, fair equality of opportunity, and the difference principle."[94] Cohen claims there are three features of an epistemic conception of democracy. First, the idea of a public good, or general will that can be used as a populist tool for identifying an objective standard for democratic decisions which is independent of any procedure. Societal values and public needs work as a measuring stick for the effectiveness of democratic outcomes and effective approaches in turn justify the process. Second, an epistemic conception of democracy is a cognitive view and sees democratic citizens as expressing their beliefs as to the best outcome, rather than personal preferences. Epistemic democracy takes it that individual citizens argue for what they consider to be the best outcome—what they sincerely believe to be in their best interest by way of being the best solution to the social problem. Third, epistemic

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[92] Jane Mansbridge, et al., "A Systemic Approach to Deliberative Democracy," in *Deliberative Systems: Deliberative Democracy at the Large Scale*, ed. John Parkinson and Jane Mansbridge (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Jack Knight, et al., "Roundtable on Epistemic Democracy and Its Critics." *Critical Review* 28, no. 2 (2016), doi:10.1080/08913811.2016.1206744.

[93] Joshua Cohen, "An Epistemic Conception of Democracy," *Ethics* 97, no. 1 (1986), http://www.jstor.org.ccl.idm.oclc.org/stable/2381404; David M. Estlund, "Beyond Fairness and Deliberation: The Epistemic Dimension of Democratic Authority," in *Deliberative Democracy: Essays on Reason and Politics,* ed. James Bohman James and William Rehg (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997), 260.

[94] Cohen, "An Epistemic Conception of Democracy," 34.

democracy is deliberative insofar as the decision-making process requires citizens to offer reasons and respond to them, adjusting their beliefs accordingly.

Cohen's defense of the epistemic dimension of democracy opens the door for correctness theories of democracy, such as Condorcet's Jury Theorem (CJT) and the Diversity Trumps Ability Theorem (DTA), which rely on the decision-making abilities of the many to solve social problems. Correctness accounts hold that democratic deliberation can produce true, correct, or at least better answers to social problems than alternative systems and so democracy is justified by its ability to create these outcomes. While it may seem naïve to think that large groups can create correct answers through democratic debate, recent work on the CJT shows that this trust is not misplaced.[95] The CJT proposes that when voters have at least two options, vote based on their best judgement (and not strategically), vote independently, and are correct (on average) at least 51% of the time, then democratic outcomes will be correct. If individual voters are more likely than not to be correct, then by aggregating large numbers of voters the decisions are also more likely to be correct, and the larger the sample, the more likely the correctness of the outcome. Beyond being an interesting statistical peculiarity, the CJT offers a path for a substantive justification of democracy – democratic outcomes are legitimate because democracy is a good collective decision-making process that is more likely than other political systems to get things right or, as List and Goodin put it, "democracy might lay a surprisingly strong claim to being the best imperfect epistemic procedure available."[96]

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[95] Bernard Grofman and Scott L. Feld, "Rousseau's General Will: A Condorcetian Perspective," *The American Political Science Review* 82, no. 2 (1988): 567-76, doi:10.2307/1957401.

[96] Christian List and Robert E. Goodin, "Epistemic Democracy: Generalizing the Condorcet Jury Theorem," *Journal of Political Philosophy* 9, no, 3 (December 2002), 281, doi:10.1111/1467-9760.00128.

In response, David Estlund claims that the CJT seems to be an argument, not for democracy, but for epistocracy – rule by experts. If large groups are likely to get it right, then groups of more intelligent deciders would be even more effective. Hélène Landemore comes to the defense of the correctness approach, pointing out that, in fact, the diversity of the group matters more than the intelligence of the individual members of the group. The Diversity Trumps Ability (DTA) approach and her slightly augmented version: The Numbers Trumps Ability Theorem (NTA) explain that while individual members of a group can be better than one another at problem solving, the cognitive diversity of the group as a whole—in other words, the breadth of the diversity of perspectives—can lead to overall better decision-making. Landemore argues that the DTA/NTA approach offers a functionalist explanation for democracy's legitimacy. [97] She says that, historically, democracies were originally created based on concerns for justice, freedom, and equality; however, the unintended epistemic benefits of democracy are so great that they are responsible for much of the practical success of democracy around the world.[98] In other words, democracy has been successful because it is an effective way to solve social problems, for example, democracy avoids famines and is correlated with peace between democratic regimes.[99] Landemore goes on to argue that this 'democratic reason' creates a normative justification for democracy for three reasons. First, the DTA/NTA offers a reason to stay

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[97] Hélène E. Landemore, "Why the Many Are Smarter than the Few and Why It Matters," *Journal of Public Deliberation* 8, 1 (March 2012), https://www.publicdeliberation.net/jpd/vol8/iss1/art7.

[98] Landemore, "Why the Many Are Smarter than the Few and Why It Matters," 8.

[99] Amartya Sen,.*Freedom as Development* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 1999; Spencer Weart, *Never At War: Why Democracies Will Not Fight One Another*, (New Haven: Yale University Press), 1998.

committed to democracy for those who are not compelled by other philosophical justifications based on "the value of consent, freedom and equality."[100] Second, it combines two seemingly opposing approaches to democracy: aggregative and deliberative. Aggregative approaches (e.g. Schumpeter) argue that democracy just aggregates preferences to determine a majority view, any other concerns are generally seen as superfluous or oppressive. Deliberative democrats see an inherent benefit to the deliberative process. The DTA/NTA approach is aggregative, but not of preferences, rather, of judgements and predictions; moreover, the diversity of perspectives becomes useful through deliberation. So, it is both aggregative and deliberative. Lastly, the DTA/NTA is a correctness approach that does not fall victim to Estlund's epistocracy objection.

In addition to Estlund's epistocracy objection, critics of the justificatory approaches of the CJT and DTA/NTA focus on two main objections: the problem of deference and the lack of a robust conception of democracy. The CJT and DTA/NTA claim that there is an independent, objective standard of correctness. The CJT claims that the likelihood of correct answers comes with a larger sample while the DTA/NTA says the same for diverse groups. In either case, their claim is that the outcome of group deliberation *is* correct, which means that those minority beliefs, which are not the outcome of the deliberative process, are, therefore, incorrect. The DTA/NTA approaches ask for too much deference from the minority who must accept that their position is wrong.[101] Assuming the minority offers reasons from a position of sincerity, and if they do not change their opinion due to the outcome of the debate, then they may nonetheless

[100] Landemore, "Why the Many Are Smarter than the Few and Why It Matters," 9.

[101] Elizabeth Anderson, "An Epistemic Defense of Democracy: David Estlund's Democratic Authority," *Episteme* 5, no. 1 (2008): 129–39, doi:10.3366/E1742360008000270.

reject the outcome as correct, despite the outcome aligning with the independent standard of correctness. This is especially the case when the debate is over moral matters. Moreover, the CJT and DTA/NTA only argue for the increased ability to reach correct outcomes but do not guarantee correctness, and so, it seems reasonable for people to disagree with the alleged correctness of those outcomes.[102] The second main objection to correctness theories is the lack of a robust conception of democracy. Saffon and Urbinati argue that correctness theories even undermine equal political liberty by subordinating it to "the political outcomes' proximity to truth" and that "imposing a substantive standard to democratic decisions may threaten freedom."[103] Correctness theories are monistic insofar as the single criterion for democratic legitimacy is the correctness of outcomes. Fairness or political equality are not a consideration outside of their purely instrumental value. Elizabeth Anderson argues that democratic citizens have a right to make claims on others as well as a right to equal treatment; therefore, there is more to equality then just its instrumental value in creating correct outcomes.[104] Democracy has an intrinsic value that correctness theories ignore. Russell Muirhead points out that elections are not held to get it right but held because elections are "simply the most convincing way of recognizing the equality of citizens."[105] These two objections are forceful considering the fact of

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[102] Cass Sunstein, *Why Societies Need Dissent*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press), 2003. Sunstein argues that homogenous groups may make worse decisions as a result of group polarization.

[103] Saffon and Urbinati, "Procedural Democracy, the Bulwark of Equal Liberty," 442.

[104] See Elizabeth Anderson, "Democracy: Instrumental vs. Non-Instrumental Value," in *Contemporary Debates in Political Philosophy*, ed. Thomas Christiano and John Philip Christman (Chichester, U.K.: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), doi:10.1002/9781444310399.

[105] Russell Muirhead, "The Politics of Getting It Right," *Critical Review*, 26: no. 1-2 (2014): 125, doi:10.1080/08913811.2014.907045.

reasonable pluralism. While correctness theories are incomplete, the insights of the epistemic functions and benefits of democracy need to be taken into consideration within a justificatory framework.

Another particularly compelling aspect of epistemic democracy that correctness theories highlight is the recognition that democratic deliberation *aims* at something objective. Seizing on this important insight, Cohen brings truth back into the fold within a Rawlsian framework in his 2009 essay, "Truth and Public Reason." There Cohen introduces the idea of a 'thin' truth. Rawls claims there is no sufficiently minimal conception of truth that will achieve overlapping consensus – truth in any form will always be controversial and therefore reasonably rejectable. Reasons should not be offered because they are true but rather because they are reasonable, i.e., likely to be accepted by others. Cohen points out, however, that even though truth is replaced by reasonableness, there is still a question of which of the competing reasonable conceptions of justice put forward is the "most reasonable." [106] Reasonableness then becomes the new objective standard instead of truth. Removing truth from debate does not remove disagreement, since there is still a debate over what makes a reason reasonable. Truth-talk simply highlights that a disagreement already exists and getting rid of truth in favor of reasonableness does not solve the problem of disagreement. Removing truth also does not remove the objective dimension of deliberation—that there is a most or more reasonable reason. The basic concept of belief requires truth-aiming, with truth as a standard of correctness for belief, such that if one believes '*p* is not true', that does away with the belief *p*.[107] So, Cohen argues instead that truth has "a legitimate

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[106] Joshua Cohen, "Truth and Public Reason," *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 37, no. 1 (2009): 10.

[107] Cohen, "Truth and Public Reason," 13.

role to play in public, political argument" and that deliberation can include both public reasons (i.e. shared reasons) and true assertions.[108] The conception of truth Cohen sees as compatible with democratic deliberation is a minimal, rather than metaphysical, conception , which he refers to as a "political conception of truth."[109] Truth in this political sense is a standard for our judgements inherent in our deliberation of which policy is better or more effective than another. People can offer their true reasons if they understand these reasons to be true within the political realm, in other words, that they take it to be true that one policy is better than another, and not that their beliefs *are* metaphysically true. This requires a both a tolerant and fallibilistic attitude in political debate.

3.4 Epistemic proceduralism

David Estlund also argues in favor of the use of truth in deliberation. His approach depends on a distinction he makes between justification and legitimacy. He defines justification as the process of offering reasons to support some democratic outcome. On the other hand, legitimacy of state power comes from the fairness of the deliberative procedure. Justification requires the 'whole truth' found in our comprehensive doctrines. Each person should feel free to offer their own reasons why one policy is better than another. Estlund shares this view with Cohen and correctness theories—that there is an objective dimension to deliberation; however,

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[108] Cohen, "Truth and Public Reason," 3.

[109] Cohen, "Truth and Public Reason," 3.

he criticizes pure correctness approaches by pointing out that if correctness is the primary goal and justifying principle, then democracy seems to be an inefficient system for attaining such a goal.[110] Correctness theories make an implicit argument for epistocracy rather than democracy because epistocracy seems to be a more reliable system for attaining correctness. Moreover, correct outcomes are not enough to create legitimacy in the losing minority. Rather, legitimacy is established through a fair procedure *that is more likely* to lead to correct outcomes. The fairness of the procedure does not alone create legitimacy, because, as he points out, a coin flip seems to be the ultimate method for attaining that goal.[111] So, if there are some other conditions beyond fairness that should be considered, the option which is epistemically better is preferable to achieve legitimate outcomes. He calls this position epistemic proceduralism. A courtroom jury is a good example. A jury's decision is legitimate, not because it always achieves the correct outcome, but because the procedure is fair, and the outcome is likelier than not to be correct. This approach affirms the need for democratic deliberation to be efficient (insofar as it can solve problems) but without affirming the infallibilism of majority decisions. It is proceduralist insofar as it promotes fairness, but also places value on the deliberative abilities of democracy. True reasons justify democratic outcomes to those who offer their reasons, but legitimacy of decisions depends on the fairness of the procedure and its likelihood of leading to correct outcomes. Estlund brings truth back into the conversation, but only insofar as comprehensive doctrines are

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[110] David M. Estlund, *Democratic Authority: A Philosophical Framework* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press), 2007.

[111] David M. Estlund, "Beyond Fairness and Deliberation: The Epistemic Dimension of Democratic Authority," 260.

viewed as true by their holders. The justificatory work is not done by the comprehensive doctrine but instead by the fair, democratic procedure of exchanging reasons.

Estlund's epistemic proceduralism includes truth in deliberation and avoids the problem of exclusion found in Cohen's epistemic-Rawlsian approach. He agrees with Cohen that people need to be able to offer their real reasons to justify democracy on their own terms but splits with Cohen over the scope of the truth of those reasons. Cohen says that people can offer truth-based reasons (reasons stemming from comprehensive doctrines) but must also recognize the fallibility of the truth of those reasons—what he calls a political conception of truth. Estlund sees this view of truth as too limited, pointing out that "political justice might not be true justice. If it's not true justice, it's not justice."[112] Imposing Cohen's substantive normative restriction on the scope of truth lands in the same trouble as Rawls's public reason: some people will not be able to view their truth as fallible and will reject this normative restriction. Rather, Estlund argues, justification requires the 'whole truth'. However, to ward off the challenge that using the whole truth imposes one person's justification on others, Estlund separates justification from legitimacy. Truth can be used when one offers justifying reasons as to why one policy is better than another, but procedure establishes legitimacy. Yet, Estlund's proceduralism is not based on fairness alone. He clarifies that if fairness is the goal of proceduralism, then a coin-flip seems as good a procedure as any; instead, there ought to be concern for the substantive epistemic value of democratic deliberation. Utilizing the benefits of correctness theories, Estlund finds legitimacy in democratic procedures because democratic procedures are fair and are more likely to lead to

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[112] David M. Estlund, "The Truth in Political Liberalism," in *Truth and Democracy*, ed. Jeremy Elkins and Andrew Norris (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 267.

correct answers. Democratic procedures are held "to be epistemically the best among those that are better than random."[113]

Epistemic proceduralism is a promising approach to justification considering the fact of reasonable pluralism because it has several benefits. First, by allowing individuals to offer their true reasons, it avoids the problem of exclusion. Individuals are free to offer reasons stemming from their comprehensive doctrines because they take those reasons to be true and that those reasons point to one policy being better than another. This leads to the second benefit, it acknowledges the objective dimension of democratic deliberation. Democratic debate must aim at something, otherwise, what is the point? When people deliberate it is to determine which policies are better than others. Limiting reasons based on reasonableness, for example, will only hurt the effectiveness of deliberation to reach good answers. Third, it avoids the problem of oppression. Although truth is allowed back into debate, those reasons are only used to justify why one policy is better than another, but those reasons do not justify the authority of the law. Legitimacy is created through the procedure rather than the truth of the reasons based on the truth of their corresponding comprehensive doctrines. This way no one is oppressed by a law that is justified by another's personal beliefs. Fourth, it avoids the problem of deference. The drawback to correctness theories is that they ask everyone to accept the outcome of deliberation as the correct answer and consequently to accept their own position as incorrect. This asks for too much deference from the losing side of the debate and can lead to reasonable rejection of political outcomes. By couching legitimacy in the procedure, which is more likely than not to

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[113] Estlund, "Beyond Fairness and Deliberation: The Epistemic Dimension of Democratic Authority," 260.

reach a correct answer, the losing side is not asked to accept their position as incorrect. Rather, they should accept the outcome because of the fairness of the procedure. Notwithstanding these benefits, epistemic proceduralism still has an area of concern: the moral obligation placed on democratic citizens.

Estlund's account of democratic legitimacy stems from a conception of what he calls 'normative consent'. In consent theories of legitimacy, state authority results from the individual citizens consenting to laws. In this approach, moral obligations, like the duty to obey state laws, are created through the consent of the governed—without consent there is no legitimate authority. Estlund proposes that there are cases where it may be the case that consent is not given but, nonetheless, consent *should* be given. Comparing democracy to a jury, Estlund claims that the authority of the jury derives from the duty to *promise* to obey those juries, and that duty to promise rests on the epistemic value of the jury "that no reasonable or qualified point of view can deny."[114] Democracies and juries alike are more likely than random to produce substantively just outcomes (even when those outcomes are erroneous), and there is a great value to having laws and policies that are substantively just. Moreover, he claims there is no nondemocratic alternative that can produce these outcomes better. This creates normative consent, in other words, a moral obligation to consent to democratic outcomes.

Even granting that the epistemic powers of democracy can, or are more likely, to produce substantively just outcomes than nondemocratic alternatives, it is still not clear how those substantively just outcomes are set as ends to be achieved. Here Estlund points to a distinction

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[114] Estlund, *Democratic Authority: A Philosophical Framework,*156.

between formal and substantive epistemic value. Substantive refers to the content of the standard, formal to the process of determining the outcome. His example is a biology student will likely do well on a biology test because the student already possesses the substantive information, while a group of students working together will likely do well because of their cooperative ability to create good answers. If the legitimacy of democracy rests on its ability to create just outcomes, then, according to a substantive epistemic account, there must be a standard of justice in which to aim. But this standard would be controversial and therefore, a system aiming at creating that pre-determined just outcome is as controversial as the standard. Instead he says epistemic proceduralism is a formal epistemic account, which places the value on the process to get it right "from the standpoint of justice or common good *whatever the best conception of those might be*."[115] Epistemic proceduralism, he claims, can produce the best outcomes, even if it does not set or even know what those outcomes are in advance of the procedure. Estlund admits that this might seem far-fetched—that we can know a system leads to correct answers if we do not know what is correct before setting off to achieve that goal—but he defends that position by claiming that we can have a sense of correct or just outcomes based on the ability of those outcomes to have a 'good performance' in relation to 'primary bads': war, famine, economic collapse, political collapse, epidemic, and genocide.[116] Primary bads are those injustices that would be agreed upon by "all reasonable comprehensive views."[117]

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[115] Estlund, *Democratic Authority: A Philosophical Framework*, 169.

[116] Estlund, *Democratic Authority: A Philosophical Framework*, 163.

[117] Estlund, *Democratic Authority: A Philosophical Framework*, 162.

Yet, this falls into the same trouble as public reason, that a particular conception of justice must be reasonably acceptable to all. This is a problem—not because primary bads are not reasonable—but what Estlund counts as just is described in overly general terms. The trouble with a reasonable acceptability requirement is that it is difficult to agree on what counts as just—offering a conception of justice that is vague does not reduce this problem. Moreover, legitimacy does not depend on achieving this goal of general justness, but on a system that is more likely than not to achieve justice. But, what does it mean for a system to have a high probability of achieving justice, let alone a conception of justice that is not explicit? Estlund's case for democracy rests on a probability to achieve outcomes that are not clear. Anderson points out that if legitimacy does not ultimately rest on epistemic criteria, then why not include thicker commitments such as autonomy and equality? And, if legitimacy resides in "a commitment to civic respect for citizens who hold a plurality of reasonable moral, theological, and philosophical ideals," then Estlund is imposing the same commitment as Rawls, and like Rawls, this requirement can be reasonably rejected.[118]

3.5 Deweyan Deliberativism

The epistemic turn has found a welcome home in pragmatist political theory. Pragmatism's experimental and holistic approach to solving human problems is well fitted to democracy, and pragmatists have been some of the most influential contributors to democratic

[118] Anderson, "An Epistemic Defense of Democracy: David Estlund's Democratic Authority," 135.

theory—none more so than John Dewey. Dewey viewed democracy as a form of scientific inquiry and the public sphere as the space where the ‘problems of men’ can be investigated and debated, a place to “convince and be convinced by reason.”[119] While Dewey did not personally use the term deliberative democracy to describe his work, contemporary Deweyan democrats such as Elizabeth Anderson, James Bohman, Amy Gutmann, Hilary Putnam, and Robert Westbrook are standard bearers of the deliberative model. Moreover, Dewey is seen by many as a proto-deliberative democrat, for example, Gregory Pappas describes Dewey as “richer in his account of deliberation than any proposed so far by deliberativists.”[120] Deliberation for Dewey is not geared toward some end, such as consensus—deliberation is both the means and the end of democracy.

Deweyan democracy harnesses the epistemic ability of social inquiry to identify and solve social problems. Anderson argues that, as an epistemic theory, the Deweyan approach is superior to others because it most accurately models the “epistemic powers of all three constitutive features of democracy: diversity, discussion, and dynamism.”[121] Deweyan Democracy focuses on the quality of discussion and inclusivity of diverse opinions. Like the DTA/NTA, Deweyan democracy views diversity as a resource to deliberation rather than a problem to overcome. When there is a wide variety of opinions and backgrounds, democratic

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[119] John Dewey, *The Collected Works of John Dewey, 1882-1953*, Electronic Edition, edited by Jo Ann Boydston and Larry Hickman (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1967-1991), MW 10:404.

[120] Gregory F. Pappas, “What Would John Dewey Say about Deliberative Democracy and Democratic Experimentalism?,” *Contemporary Pragmatism* 9 (2012): 61, doi: 10.1163/18758185-90000230.

[121] Elizabeth Anderson, "The Epistemology of Democracy," *Episteme* 3, no. 1 (2006): 13, doi:10.3366/epi.2006.3.1-2.8.

deliberation is enhanced. Whereas the CJT and DTA/NTA require a procedure-independent standard of correctness (or, for example, Cohen's idea of the public good), in the Deweyan approach, answers to social problems are constructed through the process of deliberation. Dewey rejects what he calls the "spectator" theory of knowledge, that knowledge consists of knowing objects which are independent of the knower. Rather, for Dewey, knowledge is relational to the solutions of problems. Knowledge in this sense is social and responsive. Democracy is constitutive of knowledge, rather than a process to uncover it, because democracy is experimental— it is a place to test out hypotheses. In this way democratic deliberation is an exercise in practical intelligence and leads to both higher quality answers to social problems and the personal growth of the individual engaged in inquiry. Citizens discuss remedies to social problems and then test out those solutions. When solutions fail, democracy provides a system that offers remedies and allows for the revision of policies. This approach abandons dogmatism and embraces fallibilism and cooperation between citizens and public officials. Deweyan democracy is therefore dynamic insofar as it is responsive to reasons but is also imaginative in embracing creative and novel solutions to social problems.

Deweyan Democracy is neither wholly procedural nor substantive. In fact, the Deweyan approach seemingly rejects a distinction between the two. Specific substantive outcomes and ideal procedures should not be predetermined goals of deliberation. Both are part of the debate— they are hypotheses to be tested out alongside other social issues. Dewey is dismissive of a thin proceduralism, what he calls the "political machinery" of democracy, claiming that "the strongest point to be made on behalf of even such rudimentary political forms as democracy has attained, popular voting, majority rule and so on, is that to some extent they involve a

consultation and discussion which concerns social needs and troubles."[122] Yes, majority voting limits oligarchy and rule by elites, but voting and procedures alone are insufficient as either descriptive or normative accounts. Rather, democratic procedures are a hypothesis. The value of these procedures is still relative to their ability to foster social knowledge and produce good outcomes. As Anderson points out, the success of democracy is not in its ability to be fair—we can flip a coin for fairness—success is in its ability to solve problems. But likewise, we cannot judge democracy only by external criteria. Before we can know if a proposed solution works, we have to agree as to what counts as a social problem needing attention. This is agreement is then determined by a fair procedure. Anderson writes, "whether a problem counts as of genuinely public interest is determined in part by whether it is an actual object of public concern—that is, by whether citizens or their representatives affirm its place on the public agenda through procedurally fair decision-making processes."[123] So, procedures are important but as a part of the experimental nature of democracy, i.e., democratic inquiry. Putnam explains that democratic inquiry is to be trusted because "the way in which we will find out where and how our procedures need to be revised is through the process of inquiry itself"[124] Democratic ideals are not infallible and should not be taken for granted, they are hypotheses to be tested out and improved upon. If certain democratic ideals, norms, or practices are delineated in advance of the deliberative process, then the ability for the public to make proper judgements about solutions to

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[122] Dewey, *LW* 2:364.

[123] Elizabeth Anderson, "The Epistemology of Democracy," *Episteme* 3, no. 1 (2006): 10, doi:10.3366/epi.2006.3.1-2.8.

[124] Hilary Putnam, *Pragmatism: An Open Question*, (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell), 1995, 75.

social issues is unnecessarily limited. Every problem is different and imposing pre-deliberative restrictions to debate confines the epistemic ability of the process.

Democratic inquiry, then, is not a matter of predetermined procedures or substantive outcomes, it is "a way of life."[125] Democracy is intertwined with all aspects of social and ethical life, and so is "an ethical conception…a form of government only because it is a form of moral and spiritual association."[126] Democracy is a communicative theory that reaches deeply into our lives in both our political and social associations, a "conjoint communicated experience."[127] Deweyan democracy, in this sense, requires a shared moral vision that extends past the electorate and into the social institutions. Democracy is a condition that allows for human transformation through a process of socialization and interaction. For Dewey, individuals are not given prior to this process, they are created through this relational process. Democracy then allows for human flourishing by creating a space for the development of capabilities and the public good. Political institutions are therefore a "means of creating individuals."[128]

However, this thick account of democracy may also be its drawback. Robert Talisse has written extensively on the topic, pointing out that Deweyan democracy is so substantial that it fails the reasonable rejection test.[129] He claims that Deweyan democracy is perfectionist since

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[125] Dewey, *LW* 14:226.

[126] Dewey, *EW* 1:240.

[127] Dewey, *MW* 9:93.

[128] Dewey, *MW* 12:191.

[129] Robert B. Talisse, "A Farewell to Deweyan Democracy," *Political Studies* 59, no. 3 (October 2011), doi:10.1111/j.1467-9248.2010.00860.x.

"justification lies in its ability to facilitate human flourishing."[130] The moral requirements of Deweyan democracy call for 'reconstructing' social institutions to fit this particular view of the human good. Dewey's democratic perfectionism (at least the early Dewey) is even quasi-religious. He says that it is in democracy where "the community of ideas and interest through community of action, that the incarnation of God in man . . . becomes a living, present thing."[131] Democratic engagement is, in a sense, a participation in a sort of national religion. These aspects of Deweyan democracy point towards it being a comprehensive worldview and, if so, it can be reasonably rejected by citizens with competing moral or religious views.

Rejecting Deweyan democracy on the grounds that it is an oppressive comprehensive doctrine has been met with significant pushback, and this debate is certainly lively within pragmatist political philosophy.[132] Moreover, Robert Westbrook, Hilary Putnam, and Elizabeth Anderson have offered epistemic accounts of democracy based on Dewey that are disconnected from Dewey's more comprehensive moral vision.[133] Nonetheless, adjudicating this controversy is outside the scope of this work, but many of the valuable insights of the Deweyan approach,

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[130] Talisse, "A Farewell to Deweyan Democracy," 510.

[131] Dewey, *EW* 1:4.

[132] See Phillip Deen, "A Call for Inclusion in the Pragmatic Justification of Democracy," *Contemporary Pragmatism* 6, no. 1 (2009), doi: https://doi-org.ccl.idm.oclc.org/10.1163/18758185-90000107; Joshua Forstenzer, "Deweyan Democracy, Robert Talisse, and the Fact of Reasonable Pluralism: A Rawlsian Response." *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 53, no. 4 (2018), doi:10.2979/trancharpeirsoc.53.4.03; Robert B. Talisse. "Deweyan Democracy and the Rawlsian Problematic: A Reply to Joshua Forstenzer." *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 53, no. 4 (2017): 579-83. http://www.jstor.org.ccl.idm.oclc.org/stable/10.2979/trancharpeirsoc.53.4.04; Melvin L Rogers, "Dewey, Pluralism, and Democracy: A Response to Robert Talisse," *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 45, no. 1 (2009), https://muse.jhu.edu/article/317018.

[133] Talisse's response to these views is that an epistemic conception untethered from the moral conception is simply not 'distinctively Deweyan'.

such as its view of democracy as social inquiry and the epistemic value of diversity, can be found in another pragmatist approach: the Peircean epistemic defense of democracy.

3.6 The Peircean Epistemic Defense

The Peircean Epistemic Defense of Democracy (PED) is an approach to democratic theory developed mainly by Cheryl Misak and Robert Talisse based on the 1878 essay by the classical pragmatist, Charles Sanders Peirce, "How to Make Our Ideas Clear."[134] Peirce did not write much on political philosophy; however, Misak and Talisse develop their own theory of democracy based on Peirce's theory of belief sketched out in that essay. The PED is an innovative approach to democratic theory which claims that all people, simply by being believers, are implicitly committed to democracy. The Peircean perspective views truth as "the end of inquiry"—a true belief is a belief that could not improve based on ample evidence, evaluation, and debate.

Misak argues that the Peircean view allows truth back into political and moral deliberation but within a fallibilistic frame. Peircean epistemology offers a middle ground where fallibilism is accepted but relativism is rejected. This does justice to the practical dimension of truth inquiry: our moral and political inquiries aim at something objective, even if it is the case that our truth claims are fallible. When people engage in moral and political deliberation they are not attempting to force people to take on their views but believe that through rational debate they

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[134] Charles Sanders Peirce, "How to Make Our Ideas Clear," *Popular Science Monthly* 12 (January 1878): 286-302.

can persuade others of the truth of their positions, in other words, “moral inquiry aims at truth.”[135] We believe our moral and political beliefs are true, otherwise we would not hold such beliefs. Belief in this sense is what epistemologists call ‘full belief’, a belief that one holds to be true, not a belief that one holds only in part or tentatively. Full belief can include degrees or probability of truth, for example, that a belief is more likely to be true than alternatives, but, on the whole, the believer is committed to the truth of belief and that commitment is demonstrated by the actions of the believer.[136] Democratic theory should integrate and build on this phenomenology because it preserves our deeply held convictions, even if some of those beliefs are ultimately defeasible.

Talisse proposes the PED in terms of ‘folk epistemology’, which is “ordinary epistemic activity under ordinary conditions.”[137] Folk epistemology explains how people come to hold beliefs they consider to be true which is similar to the folk psychological explanation of how normally socialized human beings employ a “pre-scientific, common-sense conceptual framework” in everyday life.[138] Folk epistemology, like folk psychology, presupposes the general rationality of the subject even if their held beliefs cannot stand up to strict scrutiny at the higher levels of philosophical debate. Talisse claims that folk epistemic principles are shared by democratic citizens, regardless of religious or moral worldviews, insofar as they are proper

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[135] Cheryl Misak, *Truth, Politics, Morality* (NY: Routledge, 2000), 3.

[136] See Andrew T. Forcehimes and Robert B. Talisse, “Belief and the Error Theory,” *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* no. 19, (2016).

[137] Robert B. Talisse, *Democracy and Moral Conflict* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 86.

[138] Paul Churchland, “Folk Psychology,” in *A Companion to the Philosophy of Mind*, edited by Samuel Guttenplan (UK: Oxford Blackwell), 1994.

believers in the Peircean sense. Folk epistemic commitments entail a commitment to democratic politics.[139] Talisse offers five principles of folk epistemology, adapted from Misak's conception of the PED:

1. To believe some proposition, *p*, is to hold that *p* is true.
2. To hold that *p* is true is generally to hold that the best reasons support *p*.
3. To hold that *p* is supported by the best reasons is to hold that *p* is assertable.
4. To assert that *p* is to enter into a social process of reason exchange.
5. To engage in social processes of reason exchange is to at least implicitly adopt certain cognitive and dispositional norms related to one's epistemic character.[140]

To believe some proposition, *p*, is to hold that *p* is true. Belief can be defined in a variety of ways, but in this case, belief is akin to what some philosophers call 'full belief'. In other words, 'to believe' is to accept a proposition as true, rather than 'to believe' in the sense that it may be *possible* that something is true, or that 'to believe' means to accept something as true even though one *knows* that thing to be false, that is not belief but rather the rejection of belief. Belief is not identical to knowledge, but when one believes, one aims at truth. To hold a belief is to hold what one considers to be a true belief. When we say we believe something, we imply that we take that belief to be true. This is what I will refer to as 'belief in the Peircean sense' (BPS).

To hold that *p* is true is generally to hold that the best reasons support *p*. The PED is an evidentialist theory. It assumes that for one to be justified in thinking that one holds a true belief,

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[139] Talisse, *Democracy and Moral Conflict*, 80.

[140] Talisse, *Democracy and Moral Conflict*, 87-88.

that belief is supported by reasons and evidence. When the evidence is inconclusive, then belief is withheld in favor of some other mental attitude (e.g. hope, desire, wish, imagine, guess). If the evidence is counter to the belief, then the belief typically recedes. Evidence in this way is an indicator of truth and our beliefs are responsive by degree. If the evidence points in another direction, then generally our beliefs change accordingly. When the evidence is more compelling, our beliefs are more steadfast. This is not a theory that says straightforwardly what counts as good evidence, simply that when we believe, *we take ourselves* to have the best reasons to believe. It would be incoherent to claim to believe something when the evidence we have points in the opposite direction. That mental attitude is more akin to self-deception. Moreover, Talisse claims that we cannot simply *will* ourselves to believe something. I cannot will myself to believe it is raining outside if I am outside and I clearly see it is not raining. An objection could be raised, for example, that the paranoid man who believes he is being followed does so on insufficient evidence, but if asked, the man will likely offer an explanation and point to what he takes to be evidence for this position. To hold a belief, which is to say to believe that a proposition is true, is to be responsive to reasons.

To hold that *p* is supported by the best reasons is to hold that p is assertable. Asserting a belief means taking responsibility for that belief and that involves awareness of the burden of proof required of justification. In other words, to believe *p* means taking it that one has the best reasons and evidence for belief and that, if called upon, one could theoretically justify that belief to others. For a belief to be assertable, it requires that that belief and the justifying reasons could withstand scrutiny. It may be the case that most people do not put their beliefs up for scrutiny, and that in many cases people are unjustified in holding a belief because their beliefs would not hold up to scrutiny, but regardless, people do take it that their beliefs could hold up to scrutiny. If

someone were to think that their belief would not hold up to scrutiny, then it seems fair to assume that that person would also not take it that they had the best reasons to believe, in which case belief is not the correct word to describe their mental attitude.

To assert that *p* is to enter into a social process of reason exchange. To be justified in believing that we have the best reasons, even at the folk epistemic level, we also need to engage in a certain amount of social inquiry. In this way folk epistemology is not contemplative, but actional; "epistemology is something that we –*all* of us—*do*."[141] Proper believing requires an engagement in evidence collection, evaluation, and debate. To believe *p* is to be open to other reasons, to be fallible in the sense that if better reasons come about then a different belief ought to be adopted. If believing means to aim at truth, then when a belief is held, that belief needs to be defendable as true with the best reasons. Making an assertion means engaging in the process of reason exchange with others; to test the belief against the scrutiny of others. Avoiding this criticism by insulating oneself from others represents what Talisse calls, "epistemic bad faith."[142] To be justified in holding a true belief, we must engage others, test our beliefs, and be open to criticism and, if necessary, belief revision.

To engage in social processes of reason exchange is to at least implicitly adopt certain cognitive and dispositional norms related to one's epistemic character. Folk epistemology is actional and requires engaging with others to test the veracity of beliefs. To be able to engage with others in an epistemically productive manner requires certain amount of decorum. Arguing

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[141] Talisse, *Democracy and Moral Conflict*, 105.

[142] Talisse, *Democracy and Moral Conflict*, 105.

in bad faith does not help one's own case. Offering *ad hominem* attacks, belittling opponents, and taking an obstinate position does not count towards justifying one's own beliefs as true. To engage in the social process of reason exchange requires an open disposition. Talisse is clear that this does not require 'civility', which can stifle debate and promote the status quo, but it also does not mean we ought to take an antagonistic approach to our interlocuters. Talisse suggests in place of antagonism, we take the position of agonism, disagreement can be uncivil, but it must stay reasonable. Reason exchange, especially with those whom we disagree, is primary to test our beliefs as true, and adopting this epistemic character helps create that justification.

According to Talisse, embedded in the epistemic norms required of belief in this Peircean sense is an implicit commitment to democracy. To hold a belief, is to hold that the belief is true, which is to say, it is assertable and defendable with the best reasons. To be justified in thinking our belief is assertable, we must test out our beliefs through social inquiry and engage others with a good epistemic character. To be confident that our inquiry can lead to true beliefs, we must have access to reliable information, be free to gather with others, be allowed to form our own conceptions of truth and the good. In other words, the ability to hold true beliefs is dependent on a free and open society which protects debate throughout society, government, and its institutions that only a democratic system can provide. Therefore, democracy is the political manifestation of our commitment to epistemic norms; it is implicitly justified by our epistemic commitments to the veracity of our own beliefs. Talisse argues that "only in a democracy can one be a proper believer." [143] A society that limits freedom, also limits epistemic abilities. A

[143] Talisse, *Democracy and Moral Conflict*, 121.

society rife with propaganda, and state-imposed ideologies will lack citizens who can think freely and access the type of information necessary to test beliefs. If we lack an open democratic society, we lack justification of our beliefs.

In comparison to the other epistemic approaches discussed in this essay, and with political liberalism, the PED is a promising approach. Whereas public reason liberalism places moral requirements on the types of reason brought into the public sphere, effectively excluding many citizens, the PED ask citizens to share reasons, and the diversity of interlocuters adds to the ability to test out the veracity of beliefs. In other words, political liberalism sees pluralism as a challenge to overcome and the PED sees pluralism as a resource to help find truth. The PED includes more voices in public debate, which means more people can see their reasons as justifying democratic outcomes. Unlike the CJT and DTA, justification does not lie in the correctness of the outcomes, but individuals justify democracy through their own commitments to epistemic norms. Their commitment to the veracity of their own opinions implies a commitment to a democratic system which allows the formation of those opinions.

The PED also offers a substantial defense of democratic norms, practices, and institutions without imposing oppressive normative requirements. When democratic citizens view each other as enemies, then democracy is really a sort of Hobbesian truce. This is an untenable position for democracy. Citizens need to view each other as equals, and the PED offers a commitment to the equality of others through epistemic commitments. This requires viewing other people as epistemic peers, so that there can be a proper exchange of reasons to test the veracity of beliefs. This is not a moral requirement of citizenship; it is a purely epistemic requirement for proper believing. Through the requirements of belief (which all believers accept just by holding beliefs)

inquirers must view each other as epistemic peers which in turn requires seeing each other as political equals and affirms the rights and dignity of all people.

The PED values the objective dimension of democratic deliberation without imposing any comprehensive doctrine. Public debate aims to create effective public policy, which requires exchanging the best reasons. As Cohen points out, to say one policy is better than another is to make a claim about the objective, practical reality of that policy. If there is no truth to public arguments, then debate is merely an exercise in power dynamics, cultural conflict, and theatrics. The PED recognizes this objective dimension of debate but unlike the CJT and DTA it does not impose a conception of correctness based on a procedure-independent standard.

Lastly, the PED reflects the constructive aspect of democratic debate. To hold a belief is to hold that the belief is true, and to hold that the belief is true is to engage in a process of reason exchange, and that process is a constitutive process. Exchanging reasons is a process of creating, revising, and refining beliefs. Where aggregative conceptions of democracy view democratic debate as adding up static beliefs, the PED views beliefs as fluid and responsive to reasons. A vital part of democracy is the dynamic way problems are solved through social cooperation and leveraging the epistemic benefits of an open society.

3.7 Conclusion

Correctness theories, epistemic proceduralism, and pragmatist views demonstrate that truth can play a role in democratic justification, may be unavoidable anyway, and can improve deliberation. The contention that truth ought to be avoided is therefore misplaced. I have argued that the PED is the most promising of these approaches, but it is not my contention that the

theory is entirely successful in its justification of democracy. There is still significant work left to be done. The remainder of this dissertation will further engage with this theory by analyzing objections made against the PED and offering my own objections and possible remedies.

In the next chapter, I will engage with the most discussed objection to the PED, what I call the 'faith objection'. This objection claims that the PED is in fact a comprehensive doctrine insofar as the PED contains controversial epistemic norms. The argument is that the PED, as a self-described evidentialist theory, requires evidence for 'proper' believing, which many religious believers do not consider themselves to possess. If it is the case that the PED imposes this evidentialist requirement and it can be reasonably rejected by persons of faith, then the PED is oppressive and is non-viable. I will argue that this objection is overstated, that most cases of faith are doxastic and conform to what I consider to be the 'wide' evidentialism of the PED. Nonetheless, there are cases of non-doxastic faith which do not conform to this wide evidentialism and therefore pose a concern for the PED, but this does not threaten its overall justificatory viability.

Chapter Four: The Faith Objection

4.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I discussed the benefits of epistemic approaches to justifying democracy and suggested the Peircean epistemic defense (PED) as the most promising because it offers a substantive defense of democracy while avoiding the problem of imposing oppressive normative commitments that can be reasonably rejected. Moreover, the PED sees a diversity of viewpoints as an epistemic benefit to democracy rather than a challenge to overcome and takes seriously the objective dimension of democratic debate. In this chapter, I will discuss an objection to the PED based on epistemic norms of faith. The faith objection to the PED posits that religious believers do not hold the same standard of evidence and reason responsiveness required by the PED for democratic justification. I will evaluate this objection to the PED by analyzing various accounts of faith for compatibility with belief in the Peircean sense (BPS). I suggest that most accounts of faith are doxastic and, if the Peircean commitment to evidentialism is sufficiently 'wide', the doxastic commitments of faith are compatible with BPS and therefore, the PED is a viable theory. However, it is the case that some non-doxastic accounts of faith present challenges for the PED. Nonetheless, I suggest these accounts do not significantly challenge the viability of the PED because these faith attitudes are still indirectly responsive to reasons and evidence.

4.2 The Faith Objection

The PED purports to offer a substantial defense of democratic norms, practices, and institutions while avoiding the imposition of any substantive normative commitments that can be reasonably rejected. The Peircean approach avoids controversial moral commitments in favor of what they consider to be uncontroversial epistemic commitments based on Peirce's definition of belief. In short, beliefs aim at truth, and for one to say that they hold a belief means they hold that their belief is true. To hold that some belief is true requires the believer be responsive to reasons and evidence and engage in the social process of reason exchange. To be reasonably confident that reason exchange is fruitful in its epistemic aims, reason exchange requires an open society with institutions that protect epistemic integrity. Democracy is the best political system to ensure these epistemic conditions. Therefore, the Peirceans argue, since all proper believers share these epistemic commitments, they share a commitment to democracy.

However, it is not obvious that a Peircean conception of belief and the commitments entailed by belief to reason-responsiveness and democracy are shared by all. Several critics point to religious belief as an example of belief that does not conform to BPS but is nonetheless rational to hold. If religious beliefs are not BPS, then religious believers may not have reason to commit to democracy. What I call the faith objection comes in a at least three forms:

> *FO1: Religious beliefs should be considered 'faith', and faith is nonrational because it is not responsive to reasons and evidence, nonetheless, faith aims at truth, therefore, religious beliefs are not BPS.*

FO1 claims that the epistemic commitments of religious belief are in conflict with the epistemic commitments the PED claims are shared by all. BPS is the view that belief both aims

at truth and is reason-responsive. Matthew Sleat argues that this view of belief (BPS) is not compatible with religious belief. He says that if belief is defined in the Peircean sense, then religious belief is not properly a belief at all because religious beliefs do not require reasons. He claims that religious believers do not hold their religious beliefs "because they think there are good reasons to do so but because they have made some 'leap of faith'."[144] Despite lacking reasons for belief, religious believers still hold their beliefs to be true and so religious belief is better characterized as "a matter of faith rather than reason."[145] Religious faith involves a belief that aims at truth but is not reason responsive. Michael Bacon adds that many who believe in the doctrine of original sin view the mind as "compromised from birth" and "therefore incapable of the rational appraisal of evidence and reasons."[146] If religious belief is not reason responsive, then religious belief does not require reason exchange and therefore does not require the conditions of an open democratic society for one to hold true beliefs. In other words, religious believers are committed to truth but are not committed to democracy, so, the PED's justification for democracy fails. Sleat says that this leaves the PED standing as a coherent theory with persuasive justificatory power for the non-religious and the anti-democratic Schmittian, but it excludes the religious. Sleat puts it sharply: "It is a good sign that something has gone wrong

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[144] Matthew Sleat, "Justification, Pluralism and Pragmatism," *European Journal of Pragmatism and American Philosophy* 2 (December 2013): 50, https://doi-org.ccl.idm.oclc.org/10.4000/ejpap.539.

[145] Sleat, "Justification, Pluralism and Pragmatism," 50.

[146] Michael Bacon, "The Politics of Truth: A Critique of Peircean Deliberative Democracy," *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 36, no. 9 (2010).

with a justification of liberal institutions if it can provide good reasons for the Nazi to support liberal institutions but not for the religious believer."[147]

FO2: Some religious beliefs are 'properly basic' beliefs, which are rational despite not being responsive to reasons or evidence and are therefore not BPS.

Whereas FO1 describes religious belief as nonrational because it aims at truth but is not reason responsive, FO2 argues that some religious beliefs, which aim at truth and are not reason-responsive, are nonetheless rational because these are 'properly basic' beliefs. Karin Jønch-Clausen and Klemens Kappel argue that the standard of rationality held by BPS is incompatible with the standard of rationality of some religious beliefs. Invoking a concept articulated by Alvin Plantinga, they claim that there are 'properly basic' beliefs, which are beliefs that are foundational and "are not based on other beliefs providing them with evidential support," e.g., the existence of God is basic.[148] Properly basic beliefs are rational because they are self-evident and do not require additional evidence for their veracity, so these beliefs aim at truth but are not reason responsive, at least in the sense that they do not require evidential support beyond self-evidence. While it may be the case that these basic beliefs compromise a small number of beliefs, these beliefs are nonetheless foundational for a host of other beliefs. Like FO1, FO2

[147] Sleat, "Justification, Pluralism and Pragmatism," 51.

[148] Karin Jønch-Clausen and Klemens Kappel, "Social Epistemic Liberalism and the Problem of Deep Epistemic Disagreements," Ethical Theory and Moral Practice: An International Forum 18, no. 2 (2015): 376, doi:10.1007/s10677-014-9523-y.

argues that basic religious beliefs do not require reason responsiveness and therefore do not require the conditions of an open democratic society for one to hold true beliefs, so, the PED's justification for democracy fails.

FO3: Religious persons have an epistemic and even a moral duty to avoid reason exchange because it is epistemically unhelpful or worse, leads to false beliefs.

FO3 challenges premise T4 and T5, arguing that religious believers do not need to engage with others (e.g. nonbelievers) to justify the truth of their beliefs. Jønch-Clausen and Kappel explain that there are different epistemic systems which have different epistemic norms. Religious believers may be part of the kind of epistemic system that views other systems as unhelpful to their own because exchange between systems may not lead to epistemic progress.[149] If other epistemic systems provide unreliable or false information, then it is epistemically better to avoid such engagement. Similarly, Michael Bacon argues that even if the religious believer does engage with non-believers, "this does not in itself require that they attend to the reasons of believers and non-believers alike."[150] For religious believers, commitment to truth may mean avoiding reason exchange to maintain epistemic integrity. Moreover, if engaging with others leads away from truth, then there is also a moral imperative to avoid engagement.

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[149] Jønch-Clausen and Kappel, "Social Epistemic Liberalism and the Problem of Deep Epistemic Disagreements," 376.

[150] Bacon, "The Politics of Truth: A Critique of Peircean Deliberative Democracy," 1083.

The Peirceans are aware of possible objections to BPS from religious believers and partially address these critiques. Talisse tries to preempt faith-based objections, ceding that there may be cases of religious belief that are not BPS, explaining that the PED is an account of *most* cases of believing, "the ordinary, the everyday."[151] Religious citizens still hold most of their ordinary beliefs in the Peircean sense, and since most ordinary beliefs warrant commitment to democracy, the exception of religious belief does not invalidate this commitment. However, it seems as though Talisse is downplaying both the significance and commonality of religious belief. For many, religious beliefs are foundational and infuse the lives of the religious believer and constitute identity. As Wolterstorff points out, "religion is not…about *something other* than their social and political existence; it is *also* about their social and political existence."[152] Even if religious beliefs are uncommon relative to ordinary beliefs, or formed through nontraditional epistemic practices, nonetheless, these beliefs are likely to be more important than ordinary beliefs and can underlie a wide range of ordinary beliefs. Moreover, from a demographic perspective, religiosity, especially in the U.S., is extensive. While attendance in organized religion is in decline, according to a 2018 study by Pew Research Center, 80% of the total U.S. population and even 72% of the religiously unaffiliated, 'nones', said they believe in God, a higher power, or a spiritual force.[153] In other words, these beliefs are more fundamental, influential, and common then Talisse is giving credit.

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[151] Talisse, *Democracy and Moral Conflict*, 86.

[152] Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Religion in the Public Square* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 1997), 105.

[153] Pew Research Center, April 25, 2018, "When Americans Say They Believe in God, What Do They Mean?"

Misak offers one possibility to address religious belief. She suggests a Wittgensteinian interpretation of religious belief, claiming that the "religious do not believe, but rather have faith."[154] She sees this as a "friendlier" approach to religion because the grounds for religious belief are sometimes "exceedingly weak" and would not support the weight of other beliefs built upon them. Religious life is not the type of life that relies on evidence of God, and "to talk about evidence and reasons for [religious] belief…destroys the whole business."[155] Sleat rightly points out that this interpretation of religious believers does not help the case for the PED. If religious belief is a matter of faith and not reason, then religious believers "hold their beliefs to be true even though they lack reasons for them."[156] If reasons are not needed to form religious beliefs, then the religious are not committed to the epistemic norms of belief, and therefore are not committed to democracy. Misak ultimately rejects this Wittgensteinian view of religious belief, arguing that "the theist might… offer reasons for her belief—she has a spiritual revelation, or takes some great revelatory book to be keyed to the evidence."[157] This insight may ultimately save the PED from the faith objection.

4.3 Evidentialism and the PED

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[154] Misak, *Truth, Politics, Morality: Pragmatism and Deliberation*, 75.

[155] Misak, *Truth, Politics, Morality: Pragmatism and Deliberation*, 76.

[156] Sleat, "Justification, Pluralism and Pragmatism," 53.

[157] Misak, *Truth, Politics, Morality: Pragmatism and Deliberation*, 76.

The faith objection rests upon the assumption that religious beliefs are not BPS because religious belief either does not require reasons and evidence to be considered true or that it does not require an exchange of reasons with other epistemic systems. In other words, religious belief does not conform to the requirements of evidentialism. This is a problem for the PED because Talisse describes the PED as an evidentialist theory, and, for many, evidentialism is taken to be the main foil to accounts of religious belief.[158] The characteristic claim of evidentialism is that religious believers either ignore evidence against their views, take a lackadaisical stance towards what counts as evidence in support of their views, or reject evidence as necessary for belief formation altogether. Evidentialism is then seemingly in stark contrast to accounts of religious belief. It is therefore worthwhile to understand what evidentialism is and in what way the PED identifies as an evidentialist theory.

Evidentialism, broadly defined, is a theory that focuses on evidence as the justifying criteria of belief. W. K. Clifford, one of the more oft-cited evidentialists, famously argued that "it is wrong always, everywhere, and for any one, to believe anything upon insufficient evidence."[159] In the more recent and definitive account of evidentialism, Earl Conee and Richard Feldman describe doxastic justification as determined by the "quality of the believer's evidence

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[158] See Stephen T. Davis, "Faith, Evidence, and Evidentialism," in *Religious Pluralism and the Modern World*, ed. Sharada Sugirtharajah (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); Alvin Plantinga, "Reason and Belief in God," in *Faith and Rationality: Reason and Belief in God*, by Alvin Plantinga and Nicholas Wolterstorff (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983); Kelly James Clark, *Return to Reason*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Erdmans Publishing Company, 1990); J. L. Mackie, *The Miracle of Theism*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982); Bertrand Russell, *Why I am Not a Christian*, (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1957).

[159] W. K. Clifford, "Ethics of Belief," in *Readings in the Philosophy of Religion*, 3rd ed., ed Kelly James Clark, (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2017), 126.

for the belief."[160] They define the evidentialist conception of evidence in a few ways. 'Scientific evidence' is the sort of evidence that is publicly available, for example, fingerprints on a gun counts as evidence that a particular person handled the weapon.[161] Although, only in the case where the person who can cognitively make the connection between the fingerprints and the weapon-holder can that person be properly said to *have* evidence—they need to be able to mentally *grasp* the evidence, as well as balance any counter-evidence. If so, then it can be said that they have *justifying* evidence. In this way, scientific evidence is not sufficient for a justified belief, a person also needs the *justifying connection*, itself being evidence, to hold a justified belief. *Beliefs* can be evidence for other beliefs, though only as intermediate forms of evidence, not 'ultimate evidence'. *Experience* counts as evidence and beliefs formed from experience can also be evidence for another belief, but as intermediate forms of evidence, transferring the original experience through to the new belief. An example is memory of an experience, which serves as evidence for another belief. *Perceptual judgements* are generally counted as justified evidence, although, these might require some background evidence—memories for example—to contextualize the perception (e.g. I am justified in my claim that my perception of a tree is in fact a tree because I have seen other trees before). *Apriori propositions* can be evidence insofar as they are self-evident, but only to those people who see these propositions as self-evident, and in this case a "non-doxastic awareness" is what provides the evidence.[162] *Inference* and

[160] Earl Conee and Richard Feldman, *Evidentialism*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press. 2004), 83.

[161] Earl Conee and Richard Feldman, "Evidence," in *Epistemology: New Essays* ed. Smith. (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2008), 84.

[162] Conee and Feldman, "Evidence," 93.

introspection can likewise be evidence if there is a proper background available. *Experiences* and *feelings* can also count as evidence, including one's "private experiences." So, it is not necessary that all evidence is "public and capable of being shared" to be considered evidence.[163] Conee and Feldman explain that evidentialism is not monolithic, and there can be different conceptions of evidentialism that are more or less inclusive of different types of evidence.

If the PED seeks to include religious believers in its justificatory scheme, then the PED will need to take the inclusivist route and accept a broad range of evidence as reasons. I suggest the PED does just that. Talisse and Misak do not lay out concrete guidelines for what counts as evidence, just that we take ourselves to have that evidence. This stipulation is important because it is a strong commitment to an *internalist* conception of evidentialism, which leaves it up to the believer to articulate their conception of evidence. For example, Talisse says that when we believe a proposition, we take it that we have sufficient evidence for the truth of that proposition and that we can articulate our reasons.[164] Justification depends on the believer's cognitive access to their evidence. This is helpful in responding to the faith objection to the PED. If what matters to the PED's conception of proper/genuine believing is that the believer thinks they have sufficient evidence and can articulate that evidence, then the door is open to an inclusive stance on what exactly counts as evidence at large. That is to say, something may count as evidence to one person while not counting as evidence to another, and an objective standard of evidence is not needed.

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[163] Conee and Feldman, *Evidentialism*, 2-3.

[164] Talisse, *Democracy and Moral Conflict*, 117.

Misak leaves open the possibility that reasons can come from a diversity of motivations. She says that reason need not be a "cold thing – a thing that stands apart from cultural meanings, from passion, and from emotion."[165] She gives two examples of beliefs that may or may not be supported by reasons: the paranoid man and the theist. She says, if the paranoid man who believes he is being followed is unable to offer reasons for why he believes he is being followed, then his is not a genuine belief. However, if the paranoid could "give what he takes to be evidence" that someone is following him, then it would be a genuine belief.[166] If the theist says she believes in God but "reasons are inappropriate" then the theist does not hold a genuine belief; however, if theist offers reasons for her belief, for example, "she has had a spiritual revelation, or takes some great revelatory book to be keyed to the evidence" then the theist does have a genuine belief.[167] In both cases, it may be that some evidentialists find that this evidence, or the degree of probability of their evidence, to be lacking such that the theist and paranoid man do not have a justified belief. But the PED is not this brand of evidentialism. Misak is clear that the evidence must be sufficient *for that person* to take it that their belief is true.

Just because Talisse and Misak take as evidence what a person considers to be *their evidence* in support of a belief, that does not mean that anything can play a role as a justifying reason. Several types of mental attitudes are not considered proper/genuine beliefs, for example, wishful thinking, self-deception, dogmatic opinion, delusion, rationalization, displacement, and

[165] Misak, *Truth, Politics, Morality: Pragmatism and Deliberation*, 49.

[166] Misak, *Truth, Politics, Morality: Pragmatism and Deliberation*, 76.

[167] Misak, *Truth, Politics, Morality: Pragmatism and Deliberation*, 49.

epistemic akrasia.[168] From this it can be inferred that certain mental attitudes cannot constitute evidence. Wishes or desires for something to be true are not evidence; delusions are not evidence. Furthermore, Misak defines a true belief as the "best belief," best meaning a belief that "would forever meet the challenges of reasons, argument, and evidence," yet, what is excluded from this definition are the Jamesian-Rortyan conceptions of "best for our lives, or most comfortable."[169] So, reasons solely relating to practical benefits may not be sufficient as evidence either. Although it may be better for my mental well-being that I believe today is Saturday rather than Friday because I slept past my alarm and am late for work, that does not mean I can use that practical mental benefit as evidence for the truth of that belief. Clearly, there are limitations to what counts as an acceptable *reason* to believe a proposition, even if there are seemingly few limitations on what may count as evidence for a belief outside of what a person takes for themselves to be evidence.

Even if the PED is what I call a 'wide evidentialist' theory, which allows many mental attitudes to constitute evidence (that other narrower evidentialist theories may not) is this approach still compatible with the multiple variety of religious epistemologies? In other words, the Faith Objection to the PED states that faith-holders are not committed to the standards of evidence, reasons, and reason exchange required by the PED. In short, are religious epistemologies compatible with wide evidentialism? If not, the PED then fails to account for religious believers, a large constituency of any democracy, rendering the PED an ineffective

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[168] Misak, *Truth, Politics, Morality: Pragmatism and Deliberation*, 74; Talisse, *Democracy and Moral Conflict*, 86.

[169] Misak, *Truth, Politics, Morality: Pragmatism and Deliberation*, 49.

theory of democratic justification. In what follows, I evaluate the compatibility of several approaches to religious epistemology with the evidentialism of the PED. I find that most of these faith-accounts will prove to be compatible.

There are generally four ways the theist can respond to the evidentialist charge that religious belief is unjustified due to lack of evidence. First, the theist can agree with the evidentialist that evidence is required for a belief to be justified but disagree that theism lacks such evidence. This is the position of many Natural Theologians, such as Aquinas, John Hick, and Richard Swinburne, who offer several different types of evidence to support religious belief. Second, the theist can disagree with the evidentialist that justified belief requires evidence, and argue that despite lacking evidence, it is nonetheless rational to believe. This position is defended by Reformed Epistemologists, Alvin Plantinga, Nicholas Wolterstorff, and Kelly James Clark, who argue that the traditional enlightenment view of reason is too limiting, and belief in God should be considered 'properly basic' and does not need any further justifying reasons. Third, the theist can agree with the evidentialist that evidence in favor of theism is either lacking or even contrary but nonetheless embrace belief on faith alone. This position is broadly construed as fideistic, which takes faith and reason to be either opposing, incompatible, or having different aims. Lastly, the theist can either agree or disagree with the evidentialist but claim that evidence is beside the point because faith is not properly understood *as a belief*. This conception of faith is non-doxastic and holds that faith is a disposition better expressed as something akin to trust or acceptance. In the following, I look at each of these four views and their compatibility with the PED's wide evidentialism.

4.4 Doxastic Faith

Natural theologians have regularly engaged with scientific arguments and their arguments continue to be responsive to an everchanging world.[170] Brian Hebblethwaite defines natural theology as "rational inquiry…[that] appeals to arguments and considerations open to all."[171] So, many Natural Theologians accept the evidentialist position and offer evidence to support faith claims. Faith is viewed as doxastic insofar as faith is a belief in a faith proposition. For example, I believe that *p*, where *p* is the faith proposition: *God exists*. It is rational to have faith in proposition *p* because it is rational to believe in proposition *p*. Richard Swinburne refers to faith defined as belief in a proposition as the 'Thomistic view', since this approach to faith is found in St. Thomas Aquinas (this view is also widespread and includes Protestants, other non-Christian religions, and natural theologians living before and after Aquinas).[172] Aquinas defines faith as a belief, saying "…the object of faith is something complex by way of a proposition."[173]

4.4.1 Natural Theology

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[170] See Jake Chandler and Victoria S. Harrison, *Probability in the Philosophy of Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); De Cruz, Helen. "The Enduring Appeal of Natural Theological Arguments." *Philosophy Compass* 9, no. 2 (2014): 145–153. https://doi-org.ccl.idm.oclc.org/10.1111/phc3.12105.

[171] Brian Hebblethwaite, "Natural Theology," in *A Companion to Philosophy of Religion*, 2nd ed., ed. Charles Taliaferro, Paul Draper, and Philip L. Quinn (Chichester, U.K.: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 196.

[172] Richard Swinburne, *Faith and Reason*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005.

[173] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica,* trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1911-1925), II-II, q1, art 2; It should be noted that Aquinas does not consider faith wholly a matter of reason, faith also requires assent, which I will discuss in the section on nondoxastic faith.

Natural theology utilizes several different types of evidence supporting doxastic faith including logical proofs, religious experience, and testimony.[174] Theistic proofs are central in the tradition to demonstrate the existence or qualities of God. There are five types of rational proofs for God's existence that have been well developed over a period of over 2,500 years. The ontological proof is an *apriori* approach which focuses on the concept of God and the metaphysical argument that demonstrates the actuality of such a concept. The four other types of proofs are *aposteriori* proofs that rely on experience in the world. The cosmological argument takes generally uncontroversial observations about the world, like movement, or the existence of objects, and creates a metaphysical argument for the existence of a being to explain these observations. The teleological or design argument proves the existence of a being based on the observed order in the world. The moral argument explains the existence of human morality as ordered by a being or as that being as the highest source of goodness. The argument from religious experience claims the existence of a being is the best explanation for human religious experience.[175] The argument from miracles relies on the validity (or probability of validity) of testimony. [176] Moreover, reason itself can be viewed as evidence. Dougherty and Rickabaugh argue that "[r]eason is the organ of evidence, which when used rightly works in harmony with

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[174] William Lane Craig and James Porter Moreland, *The Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology* (Chichester, U.K.: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009).

[175] See Stephen T. Davis, *God, Reason and Theistic Proofs*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997.

[176] Timothy McGrew and Lydia McGrew, "The Argument from Miracles: A Cumulative Case for the Resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth" in *The Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology*, ed. William Lane Craig and James Porter Moreland, (Chichester, U.K.: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009).

our affective and volitional aspects. It is that by which we perceive something as evidence in general and as evidencing something in particular."[177]

Doxastic faith supported by any of these theistic proofs is compatible with BPS. Logical proofs, religious experience, and testimony should all be acceptable forms of evidence for the Peirceans insofar as the belief-holder takes those as reasons. Despite the focus on truth, the PED is not a theory of knowledge, it is a theory of justified belief, and belief-holders are entitled to their beliefs if they have evidence that leads them to see that belief as more likely than not to be true. Whether there is consensus as to the higher probability of truth of any given logical proof for God's existence is irrelevant. The degree of probability held by the belief-holder is what matters to the Peircean.

There are two immediate objections to this compatibility. First, it has been argued that theistic proofs rarely change minds and are therefore ineffective as proofs.[178] If it is the case that these proofs are unpersuasive in either creating theists or atheists, then these proofs should not be considered evidence, since evidence justifies belief. Second, that the evidence for the truth of theism is 'evidentially ambiguous', and that the lack of determining evidence means that theism and atheism are both equally viable options.[179] In response to the first objection, BPS requires that believers take it that their beliefs are supported by evidence, and the fact that theistic arguments rarely persuade people to either join or abandon theism does not change the fact that

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[177] Trent Dougherty and Brandon Rickabaugh, "Natural Theology, Evidence, and Epistemic Humility," *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 9, no. 2 (2017): 19, doi:10.24204/ejpr.v9i2.1924.

[178] Martin Marty, *Varieties of Unbelief* (New York: Doubleday), 1964; Michael Novak, *Belief and Unbelief* (New York: Macmillan), 1965.

[179] McKim, Robert. *Religious Ambiguity and Religious Diversity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 2001.

they are cited as evidence by the believers. Also, theistic arguments alone may not sway opinion, but may be paired with other sorts of faith, either doxastic or nondoxastic. In response to the second objection, evidential ambiguity or divine hiddenness may constitute reason to be agnostic, but also opens the door to rational belief or unbelief. McKim argues that the hiddenness of God supports only a tentative belief in God, "the sort of belief that is appropriate, given our circumstances, will not be dogmatic."[180] Rather than reaching a fully skeptical conclusion—that religious belief is unjustified due to ambiguous evidence—McKim argues that religious belief should not be dogmatically held because the evidence is not definitive. This description of religious ambiguity and the resulting sort of acceptable belief is fully compatible with BPS. Talisse and Misak do not consider dogmatic belief as proper/genuine belief anyway, and McKim's 'tentative belief' seems consistent with BPS since it is responsive to the degree of probability of the evidence. Natural theology is therefore an epistemic stance that is compatible with BPS and the PED as a whole.

4.4.2 Reformed Theology

The reformed position on evidence seems to be directly at odds with the claims of evidentialism. Wolterstorff argues that for one to be entitled to religious belief, "it is not, in general, necessary that one hold [religious beliefs] for any reasons at all."[181] Likewise, Alvin

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[180] McKim, Robert. *Religious Ambiguity and Religious Diversity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 2001, 124.

[181] Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Religion in the Public Square* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 1997), 87.

Plantinga argues against the evidentialist challenge to religious belief, saying "it is entirely right, rational, reasonable, and proper to believe in God without any evidence or argument at all."[182] Evidence is not always needed for one to be entitled to religious belief because religious believers are embedded in their tradition and their religious beliefs are 'properly basic'.[183] Properly basic beliefs are foundational and do not require evidential support. Plantinga says to understand the rationality of religious belief as a basic belief, we need to understand a person's noetic structure, which is the set of propositions a person believes with the relations that hold these propositions together. We sometimes have beliefs that are based on other beliefs, such that we believe proposition *x* and *y*, and believe *y* based on *x*. In this case *x* is a 'basic belief', *y* is a non-basic belief.[184] Some basic propositional beliefs might include, 'I see a tree', which is basic insofar as it is a matter of direct perception, 'I feel pain', which is basic insofar as it is internally evident, and 'I read the paper this morning', insofar as it is a function of reliable memory. Plantinga argues that 'God exists' is also a properly basic belief because it does not rely on other foundations. This is counterintuitive for the evidentialist because the existence of God does not seem self-evident, incorrigible, or a direct perception. Plantinga invokes John Calvin's claim that God has implanted in us an innate tendency to believe in God because "there is within the human

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[182] Alvin Plantinga, "Reason and Belief in God," in *Faith and Rationality: Reason and Belief in God*, by Alvin Plantinga and Nicholas Wolterstorff, 16-93 (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press), 1983, 17.

[183] Alvin Plantinga, "Reason and Belief in God."

[184] Plantinga acknowledges that there may be cases where all beliefs are basic, or where beliefs are all based on each other, leading to no basic beliefs, but neither is typical, or to the point here.

mind, indeed by natural instinct, an awareness of divinity."[185] It is therefore within our epistemic rights to believe in God without the need for further evidential support.

Talisse anticipates Wolterstorff's objection to the PED to be that that the PED is an evidentialist theory that employs an enlightenment reasoning which fails to see the importance of a person's embeddedness in their tradition as justification for their religious belief. Talisse responds to this anticipated objection by saying that Wolterstorff is in fact proving Talisse's thesis simply by offering an argument against Enlightenment reasoning, which uses enlightenment reasoning. Talisse writes that if

> Wolterstorff intends his account to state a *truth* about human reason as such, then it is not clear how it can avoid being an Enlightenment view after all. For if it purports to state a truth about human reason as such, then surely it purports that this truth is supported by reasons, arguments, and evidence; moreover, it purports that the reasons, arguments and evidence that support its view of human reason as such are *better* or *stronger* than the reasons, arguments and evidence that support rival views of the matter.[186]

So, by engaging in reasoned debate, Wolterstorff is already acquiescing that reasons matter. However, I do not see Talisse's response to the reformed position as sufficient, since it seems the reformers are not taking aim at reason as such, but at the evidentialist requirement that reasons be provided in the case of religious belief, which is, at least to some degree, unique. Rather, the response to the reformed position should be that the reformed position is actually making an argument for a wider view of evidentialism, which is compatible with BPS.

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[185] John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, tr. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), 43-44.

[186] Talisse, *Democracy and Moral Conflict*, 117-119.

BPS says that a belief is only proper/genuine if that belief aims at truth and is reason-responsive. A properly basic religious belief (PBRB) satisfies the first clause since those beliefs are produced by properly functioning faculties "that are successfully aimed at the truth."[187] Although, it seems like the second clause is the incompatible aspect of the reformed position, since this is the evidentialist clause, which asks for reasons to support the belief. However, while it is the case that the reformed position says that reasons are not needed to support the formation of the PBRB—since the PBRB is 'innate'—it is the case that PBRBs are nonetheless responsive to reasons that may demonstrate the *falsity* of those beliefs. Plantinga refers to these sorts of reasons as 'defeaters'. A defeater is a proposition which make PBRBs irrational and unwarranted. Philip Quinn gives the examples of natural evil, and projective theories of theistic belief from Marx, Freud, and Durkheim as possible defeaters to PBRB.[188] Plantinga's response to defeaters is that, yes, defeaters are possible if a person accepts a new belief that creates an inconsistency which renders the PBRB irrational.[189] Defeaters can be offered by argument or by experiences.

Defeaters are reasons, evidence that challenges the rationality of a PBRB. This means that PBRBs are reason-responsive. Plantinga makes it clear that a person must accept a defeater for it to function as one, but the point is that there are cases where defeaters are accepted and PBRB responds to those sorts of reasons. Moreover, this does not mean that the PBRBs that do

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[187] Alvin Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief* (New York: Oxford University Press), 2000, 357

[188] Quinn, Philip L. "In Search of the Foundations of Theism." *Faith and Philosophy* 2, no. 4 (October 1985): 469-486. https://doi-org.ccl.idm.oclc.org/10.5840/faithphil19852447, 481.

[189] Alvin Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief* (New York: Oxford University Press), 2000, 366

not accept defeaters are therefore not reason-responsive. Plantinga argues that, for example, even if the argument from natural evil is convincing in many respects, that still leaves other arguments for the existence of God (e.g. theistic proofs). He argues we must "weigh the relative merits of all these arguments, and weigh them against the evidential argument from evil in order to reach the indicated conclusion."[190] In other words, religious believers may take some propositions, like belief in God, as properly basic and without evidence, but that does not mean that the believers are not responsive to reasons as a whole, and it does not mean that the PBRBs are immune to reasons. It may be too much to say that the reformed tradition is evidentialist in this sense (although that has been suggested), but what matters here is that the reformed position and PBRBs are compatible with BPS insofar as PBRBs are truth-aiming and reason-responsive.[191]

4.4.3 Fideism

There are accounts of faith where faith appears to be unresponsive to, or at least unsupported by reason. Generally considered *fideistic*, these accounts see faith as a belief held despite the lack of reasons, or in some cases even contrary to reason. Sleat points to this conception of faith as an example of the incompatibility of BPS and religious beliefs. He says a

> …large and important group of people for whom Misak's Peircian [sic] justification would not provide good reason to accept liberal institutions are those religious believers

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[190] Alvin Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief* (New York: Oxford University Press), 2000, 463

[191] Horace Fairlamb, "Sanctifying Evidentialism," *Religious Studies* 46, no. 1 (March 2010): 61-76. http://www.jstor.org.ccl.idm.oclc.org/stable/25676922.

> for whom their religious belief is a matter of faith rather than reason. These believers hold their religious beliefs not because they think there are good reasons to do so but because they have made some 'leap of faith', they hold their beliefs to be true even though they lack reasons for them.[192]

If it is the case that religious beliefs should be interpreted in the fideistic sense, which is to say, truth-aiming but not reason-responsive, then religious beliefs do not require the type of open society that BPS requires, and the PED is ineffective to many religious believers. However, this is not the view that Misak takes. She says that it may be friendlier to religion to take a Wittgensteinian approach to religious belief by classifying it as *faith* rather than as justified belief since invoking reasons and evidence to support religious belief "destroys the whole business" because "religion isn't the sort of thing for which grounds are sought."[193] But she then rejects this view of religious belief citing the fact that the religious believer often does offer reasons for her belief: "she has had a spiritual revelation, or takes some great revelatory book to be keyed to the evidence."[194] Misak sees religious belief (at least in non-dogmatic cases) as supported by reasons and therefore compatible with BPS. So, when Sleat says Misak 'endorses' this Wittgensteinian take on religious belief, it seems he is, at the very least, not being generous to her stated position. However, even if Misak does not endorse the Wittgensteinian view of faith, Sleat's point is still problematic for the PED. If the Wittgensteinian view is an appropriate

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[192] Sleat, "Justification, Pluralism and Pragmatism," 50.

[193] Misak, *Truth, Politics, Morality: Pragmatism and Deliberation*, 76.

[194] Misak, *Truth, Politics, Morality: Pragmatism and Deliberation*, 76.

account of faith, then the Peircean will need to respond to this challenge anyway to avoid Sleat's conclusion that the PED is ineffective for religious believers.

But is Sleat and Misak's characterization of faith as being unresponsive to or unsupported by reason an accurate portrayal of Wittgenstein's philosophy of religion? Wittgenstein did not write extensively about religion, yet his views have been elaborated on by many philosophers of religion. The general approach of the Wittgensteinian is to view religion as a unique form of life. Religious language arises out of those individual forms of life, such that to understand the religious language first requires an understanding of the form of life. Thus, religious language is a language-game where the form of life defines the game's rules, meaning, and rationality. Language-games are hard to decipher for those who are not part of the community, understanding requires participation in the form of life. Wittgenstein says the language-game is not based "…on grounds. It is not reasonable (or unreasonable). It is there – like our life."[195] Philosophy ought not to approach religion from an Archimedean point of view, applying universal standards of rationality across language-games. Norman Malcolm, a Wittgensteinian philosopher of religion, argues that, in this way, religion is groundless, it does not require foundations. But neither do other language-games, like science. Each game plays by its own rules and should not be held to the standards of other games. Kai Nielsen, the foremost critic of what he calls Wittgensteinian 'fideism', says that this explanation of religion is untenable. If religion and its language games are cordoned off from other language-games, that places religion

[195] Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *On Certainty* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1969), 73, para 559.

beyond the bounds of rational criticism. If the rationality of religion is no longer open to public scrutiny, this has negative consequences for our collective society.[196]

If religion is insular in the sense that justification and rationality are defined only from within, then it seems the Peircean requirements of social engagement and an open democratic society are not met. Now, it could be the case that even if Nielsen is right about the insularity of religion, it may still be that religious believers offer reasons to others within their own communities. In this case, the Peircean view may still be correct since believers take their beliefs to be true and offer reasons to each other to test and justify those beliefs. However, Nielsen's concern is that if standards of rationality are insular to individual religions, then there will be a lack of connection to the rest of society. This ties into FO3, that religious believers may not feel the need to reason with non-believers or at least weigh the opinions of believers and non-believers alike. If Nielsen is correct about the insularity of religion, then religious believers may aim at truth but, in exchanging reasons only with other like-minded believers, they either are not justified in thinking their beliefs are true, or they are justified in thinking their beliefs are true, but do not require an open society for that justification. So, the PED either fails to account for religious believers as believers or fails to demonstrate why religious believers need an open society to be justified in thinking they hold true beliefs. However, this objection rests on the characterization of Wittgensteinian account of religious belief given by Nielsen and Sleat.

D. Z. Phillips pushes back on this characterization of Wittgensteinian philosophy of religion, arguing that the Wittgensteinian position is not that religion is so separate from other

[196] Kai Nielsen, *Naturalism and Religion* (Amherst: Prometheus Books, 2001).

forms of life as to be immune to outside criticism. Understanding religious language games involves understanding that the corresponding form of life and religious meaning is determined by those individual communities, but religion is not an entirely separate sphere from other aspects of the world. For example, Phillips says that denying the connection between prayer and the events of human life is problematic: "How could God be thanked if there were nothing to thank God for?"[197] Religion is not esoteric, abstracted, and cut-off from ordinary problems, religion is a response to those problems and is significant in people's lives because those life problems are significant. Moreover, it is because religion is connected to these other aspects of life that it is possible for religion to face criticism. Phillips says,

> Religion must take the world seriously…The religious responses are fantastic because they ignore or distort what we already know. What is said falls under standards of judgement with which we are already acquainted. When what is said by religious believers does violate the facts or distort our apprehensions, no appeal to the fact that what is said is said in the name of religion can justify or excuse the violation or distortion.[198]

Religion may be a language game, each with unique rules, meaning, and justification, but if religion is connected to other parts of life as Phillips suggests, then religion is not immune from outside criticism. If religious beliefs are then open to criticism, it seems that religious beliefs, to be justified, require reason exchange within *and outside* of individual religious communities. For criticism to matter, criticism cannot be one directional. To say that religious belief is open to

[197] D. Z. Phillips, "Wittgenstein and Religion," in *Wittgensteinian Fideism?,* by Kai Nielsen and D. Z. Phillips (London: SCM Press, 2005), 45.

[198] D. Z. Phillips, *Faith and Philosophical Enquiry* (London: Routledge, 2013), 98-99.

criticism means that religious believers also need to account for that criticism and whether the criticism is accepted or responded to, it requires religious believers to exchange reasons within and outside of their religious communities. This being the case, religious belief in the Wittgensteinian sense is compatible with BPS. However, even if the Wittgensteinian conception of faith does not see religious belief as opposed to reason, there are other accounts of fideistic faith which do.

Another account of faith which is divorced from reason is found in William James's essay, "The Will to Believe."[199] In this essay, James details how people have a right to believe when the evidence is inconclusive. Responding directly to Clifford's evidentialist argument that it is always wrong to believe upon insufficient evidence, James says that there are cases where belief is justified where evidence is lacking and there is choice to be made, what he calls, a 'genuine option'. To be a genuine option, first, the choice cannot be decided on intellectual grounds. Second, the believer must have at least two options which are 'live', which is to say, an option the believer could accept (from a psychological point of view). For example, the option that a Christian God created the world is likely to be a dead option for an atheist, since they could not accept such a belief as true. Third, the option must be forced. The choice to withhold belief is not an option because choosing to withhold believing is akin to not believing. For example, one can either believe in God or not believe in God. Withholding belief is the same as not believing (although not the same as the negation – believing there is not a God). Lastly, the option must be momentous, which is to say, irreversible, significant to one's life, and unique.

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[199] William James, *The Will to Believe and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy*, (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 1956).

James gives the example of a once in a lifetime expedition to the North Pole as a momentous option. When the believer is faced with a genuine option, James claims the believer has the right to believe. In other words, the believer is epistemically justified in believing either option, despite the lack of evidence for the truth of one option over another.

If James is correct that believers are justified in holding beliefs, which they consider to be true despite the lack of evidence and reasons, then it is the case that there are beliefs which do not require reason exchange. Misak explicitly rejects beliefs based on desire or practical benefit as acceptable reasons, and as such are not genuine beliefs. Likewise, Talisse acquiesces to the fact that there are some accounts, including James, where anti-evidentialist beliefs may be considered rational, but since most beliefs are evidentialist (and James concurs), the narrow range of anti-evidentialist beliefs, the genuine options, are ultimately just a red-herring and not a real counterargument to the PED.

Yet, this response may not be sufficient. James is clear that religion is, in many cases, a genuine option, and in such cases our passional nature not only has a right but *must* decide to believe or not. If one option might be true to believe, despite the lack of evidence, then a rule that prevents one accepting such a belief as true would be "irrational." If James is correct in his evaluation of the justification of religious beliefs, then these cases are not so narrow as to be an unimportant red-herring to the PED but a real challenge to the requirements of BPS. John Bishop refers to these Jamesian cases as supra-evidential fideism and argues that religious believers are entitled to their beliefs in these cases. These cases are considered doxastic ventures, where the believer ventures beyond the available evidence. These ventures aim at truth but are not evidentialist in their justification. Bishop's argument is that these beliefs ought to incorporate

doxastic values and only include *supra*-evidentialist ventures, and not *anti*-evidentialist ventures.[200]

There may be a way to view the PED and supra-evidentialist doxastic ventures (SEDV) as compatible. SEDVs are beliefs based on some nondoxastic motivation, such as one's passional nature, but to get to the point where one is entitled to such a belief, there must first be an engagement with available evidence to demonstrate the lack of evidence for a belief. Similar to Phillips's Wittgensteinian view, SEDVs are not cut off from the world. It is only after these beliefs are tested through reason exchange can one then engage in the venture. Venturing beyond the evidence is only rational when the evidence is clearly lacking, not simply when the believer lacks evidence. Furthermore, in accepting evidentialism, Talisse argues against doxastic voluntarism, he says we cannot simply choose to believe something, we are psychologically required to believe based on what we take to be the best reasons for that belief. In venturing beyond the evidence, James says that we are psychologically determined by our passional nature to believe. It is specifically because we are forced to believe some genuine option that we are entitled to holding the resulting belief. In other words, to hold a venturing belief as true we must first test the belief in the world, which requires an exchange of reasons in an open democratic society. Only when we exhaust evidential support can we venture, and when we venture we do so unwillingly – we believe or withhold belief because it is in our passional nature. The supra-evidentialist position is therefore not incompatible with evidentialism, it is only incompatible with the Clifford-evidentialist position that all beliefs require evidence for one to be entitled. The

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[200] John Bishop, "How a Modest Fideism May Constrain Theistic Commitments: Exploring an Alternative to Classical Theism," *Philosophia* 35, no. 3-4 (December 2007).

Peircean can very well consider these SEDVs as compatible with BPS if the PED utilizes a wide evidentialism.

4.5 Nondoxastic Faith

Propositional faith is a widely accepted account of faith in the Catholic tradition and therein it is generally seen as a doxastic attitude, since to have faith in proposition *p* one also believes that *p*. However, there are several accounts of faith that are nondoxastic (NDF) and describe faith as assent, trust, or acquiescence. It is these accounts of NDF that challenge the efficacy of the PED because these attitudes do not follow the doxastic norms described by BPS. This is not to say that propositional faith and proposition belief are the same, generally propositional faith is taken to be a belief with the addition of some pro-attitude towards its subject.[201] Robert Audi clarifies that propositional faith is of two kinds, doxastic and nondoxastic or 'fiducial' faith.[202] He describes four ways propositional belief and propositional faith are different. First, belief has a truth value, but faith does not. If one holds a belief, even a weak belief, then, when the belief turns out to be wrong, it can be said the belief was mistaken, but faith cannot be mistaken. For example, holding a belief that someone will do as they say. If you believe they will do this, and they do not, then the belief was wrong, but to have faith that someone will do as they say (even when they do not) is not wrong. Audi clarifies that faith can

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[201] See Daniel Howard-Snyder, "Propositional Faith: What It Is and What It Is Not," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 50, no. 4 (2013).

[202] Robert Audi, *Rationality and Religious Commitment* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

be 'misplaced' and 'unjustified' but not wrong.[203] Second, when *beliefs* turn out to be wrong, there is a tendency to be surprised, but not necessarily disappointed. When *faith* in a proposition turns out to be wrong, there is not necessarily surprise but there is disappointment. This is because faith involves an investment in the object of the proposition that belief does not require. Third, when there is a weak belief in *p* there is likely to be some doubt that *p*, but faith can exist with little to no doubt. Fourth, faith can eliminate fear and anxiety (and other negative emotions) in a way that belief may not. Belief in a painless surgery can still coexist with anxiety about that proposition, but faith can remove such emotions, demonstrating that faith is related to trust.

4.5.1 Faith as Trust

This view of faith places it more akin to trust *in* a person, rather than a belief in the existence *of* a person. To say one has faith in God may be similar to saying one trusts God, but this is not the same as saying one believes that God exists. The view that faith is trust is what Richard Swinburne calls the 'Lutheran view'. He says to have faith in this sense is "presumably to act on the assumption that [God] will do for us what [God] knows that we want or need, when the evidence gives some reason for supposing that [God] may not and where there will be bad consequences if the assumption is false."[204] But as Audi points out, faith is not reducible to trust because we may trust someone because we have overwhelming evidence of their abilities to do

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[203] Audi, *Rationality and Religious Commitment*, 75.

[204] Richard Swinburne, *Faith and Reason* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005), 144.

what we trust them to do, i.e., we have a justified belief. Faith as trust involves a spectrum. On one end, Audi says, "you cannot have a faith in a person you do not trust," so, faith involves trust, but it is not a confidence that rises to the level of belief. [205] But there must be some level of confidence for faith as trust. If I lend a book to a friend who repeatedly fails to return my books, then this is a case of faith with low expectations, but not *no* expectations, otherwise, I would not be lending the book, I would be gifting the book. Audi says that if one has doubts to a degree just bordering disbelief, then it may not be faith as trust, but rather *hope*. However, a lack of confidence does not mean a corresponding lack of faith, faith can come in any degree. Audi says that the "steadfastness of the [faith] attitude is not proportional to its cognitive strength measured on a spectrum that ranges from inkling at one end to absolute confidence at the other."[206] In other words, I may have low expectations my book will be returned but have a high degree of faith.

Faith as trust is, therefore, to some degree a venture; faith can go beyond the available evidence. But it requires clarification at what point the venture happens. To have faith in X seems to presuppose that X exists. Faith as trust may be a venture insofar as I venture in my faith that my friend will return my book when I lack evidence they will do so, but it does not seem to be a faith in the fact *that I have a friend*. So, faith as trust can be nondoxastic but it still responds to evidence. Audi gives the example that if one has strong evidence that a disease is fatal, one can have faith that God will bring about the best outcome but still fail to have faith that the patient will survive because "[e]ven fiducial faith cannot coexist with the strong doubt one would

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[205] Robert Audi, "Belief, Faith, and Acceptance," *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 63, no. 1-3 (2008): 96.

[206] Audi, "Belief, Faith, and Acceptance," 98.

have."[207] If the evidence is not conclusive one way or another, then fiducial faith in that case is rational. One's mental attitude is thus proportional to the evidence. When the evidence is strongly in favor, then belief is the correct description of one's attitude. When the evidence is strongly against, then one may still hold out hope even if one disbelieves, but this would not be a case of faith. Faith as trust is one type of faith and the distinction between fiducial and doxastic faith is 'fluid'. Audi says that the "minimal level of expectation exhibited by doxastic faith is higher than that of fiducial faith, and the minimal level of expectation of fiducial faith—if we may use 'expectation' here—is higher than the level required for hope."[208] In other words, faith can be fiducial or doxastic based on its convictional strength, which is related to the strength of one's beliefs – and belief strength is related to reasons and evidence. So, nondoxastic fiducial faith is nonetheless responsive to evidence and reasons. It may be the case that fiducial faith exists despite some evidence against, but fiducial faith necessarily exists within a window of possibility. If one believes, then one does not have fiducial faith, if one disbelieves, then one does not have fiducial faith. Fiducial faith is dependent on other beliefs and is therefore compatible with the standards of reason and evidence required by BPS. Even when one acts on fiducial faith that *p*, Audi claims that "it will manifest itself in a weaker tendency…to presuppose *p* in reasoning and to form, inferentially, beliefs of propositions that the person takes to be entailed by *p*."[209] It may be the case that "doxastic faith may be a natural aim of someone with

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[207] Audi, *Rationality and Religious Commitment*, 84.

[208] Audi, *Rationality and Religious Commitment*, 86.

[209] Audi, *Rationality and Religious Commitment*, 85.

fiducial faith."[210] Fiducial faith may be something to fall back on when one's doxastic faith is shaken, for example, by the problem of evil, in this case, faith is "a position of some retreat; but it is not a position of surrender."[211] Nondoxastic faith is cognitive in having a propositional object and, like Schellenberg's conception of nondoxastic faith, involves a pro-attitude towards that object that may not be related to the evidence present.

4.5.2 Faith as Assent

Aquinas sees faith as a matter of propositional belief, but faith also requires assent to that proposition. Where it may be the case that one has ample evidence to believe a proposition, that does not mean one will necessarily assent to that proposition. Elenore Stump explains that acceptance of a proposition "would count as a case of the will's bringing about intellectual assent."[212] Where the intellectual case for assent is lacking, the will can create assent, for example, one's desire for something to be true can be a case of the will creating assent. Although when there is ample reason to not believe something, the will cannot force assent. In the case of faith, the object of belief is God, but God cannot be known, only propositions about God can be accepted. These propositions cannot rise to the level of knowledge but can be treated as securely as knowledge through assent generated by the will. So, faith requires assent which is a result of

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[210] Audi, "Belief, Faith, and Acceptance," 98.

[211] Audi, "Belief, Faith, and Acceptance," 98.

[212] Eleonore Stump, "Aquinas on Faith and Goodness," in *Being and Goodness: The Concept of the Good in Metaphysics and Philosophical Theology*, ed. MacDonald Scott (Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 1991), 185.

the will and not reason; however, assent still requires that the intellect not be opposed to the proposition based on reasons (i.e., evidence against the proposition), and it seems that the intellect is likely to have some reasons to assent, even if those reasons are not sufficient for intellectual assent on their own. In other words, Aquinas's conception of assent is still responsive to reason and compatible with BPS. But there are accounts of faith that lack the belief component and rely entirely on assenting to a faith proposition.

Schellenberg offers such an account. He calls this 'imaginative assent', defined explicitly as a case of nondoxastic faith. He argues for proposition faith, faith in a proposition, which does not entail belief in that proposition, rather, it is an alternative to belief, and is "positively incompatible with belief."[213] The incompatibility of faith with belief is not because faith is antithetical to belief, it is because sometimes "one finds oneself without evidence causally sufficient for belief" and one wants to "take a certain view of the world"[214] Propositional faith also involves the faith holder considering the truth of faith proposition *p* as "good or desirable" and a "disposition to purposely picture the world accordingly and focus one's mental attention on this representation."[215] In other words, the faith holder needs some weak evidence, which is insufficient for belief, but points towards a possible truth, along with a favorable assessment of that truth, and a desire for that state of affairs to be the case. Here Schellenberg's assent is similar to the accounts of faith as 'acceptance' put forth by Jonathan Cohen and William Alston. Cohen

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[213] J. L. Schellenberg, *Prolegomena to a Philosophy of Religion* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005), 132.

[214] Schellenberg, *Prolegomena to a Philosophy of Religion*, 132.

[215] Schellenberg, *Prolegomena to a Philosophy of Religion*, 133.

recognizes, like the Peircean, that belief implies an aiming at truth. Belief is a feeling that something is true, and it is a disposition and, as such, belief is not voluntary.[216] Alston says that, the "act of acceptance, unlike a state of belief, is the adoption, the taking on of a positive attitude toward a proposition"[217] The importance of this pro-attitude is that it may be possible to have a belief that a proposition *p* is true, but not want it to be so, which would not constitute a case of faith. Schellenberg argues that faith requires a "policy of assenting" to that state of affairs. This assent is voluntary and is a pro-attitude towards the proposition – what is required for this type of faith is "often done (and renewed) consciously and explicitly."[218] Nondoxastic faith as assent has a relationship with truth but is not equivalent to a belief in the truth of the faith proposition. Schellenberg gives the example of a person who finds out a friend was either in the World Trade Center during the 9/11 attack or may have had an appointment in another location. Lacking evidence for the whereabouts of the friend, Schellenberg argues that faith in the proposition that 'my friend is alive' is a proper expression of the person's attitude. There is not enough evidence for belief, but the person wants the proposition to be true, and holds a disposition toward the world as a state of affairs where the friend is alive and chooses to go along with that state of affairs, reminding herself regularly to continue to hold this attitude.

Schellenberg casts his faith as imaginative assent as compatible and even complementary to reason. He says that a defensible view of faith is an imaginative faith focused on 'ultimism',

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[216] Leonard, J, Cohen, *An Essay on Belief and Acceptance* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992).

[217] William P. Alston, "Audi on Nondoxastic Faith," in *Rationality and the Good: Critical Essays on the Ethics and Epistemology of Robert Audi*, ed. Mark Timmons, John Greco, and Alfred R Mele (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 132.

[218] Schellenberg, *Prolegomena to a Philosophy of Religion*, 135.

which he defines as the view that all religious propositions 'gesture' towards the unsurpassably great, metaphysically ultimate, which is the source of ultimate good. He argues that rational arguments for and against religious propositions ought to lead one to become skeptical, to doubt the veracity of religious propositions. He distinguishes between two types of religious skepticism: passive and active. Passive religious skepticism is when one holds religious beliefs but has some doubts to their veracity. This is a condition for religious faith, one neither believes nor disbelieves the religious proposition.[219] However, if upon listening to rational arguments against religious propositions, one is not 'immediately' passively skeptical, then, he argues, one ought to become 'actively skeptical'. We "should deliberately pursue it (active skepticism) through appropriate private and public behavior: avoiding endorsements on either side of the issue, better acquainting ourselves with evidence to which we find ourselves resistant, and so on."[220] In other words, only people who have accepted a position of skepticism in relation to religious propositions can then make the move towards faith by assenting—choosing to have faith—in those religious propositions. This means that the precondition of faith is engagement in the process of reason exchange and responsiveness to evidence. In this way, faith as assent, although nondoxastic, is compatible with BPS. FO1 argues that faith is non-rational and does not respond to evidence and reasons. While faith as assent is not a belief, it is rational, according to Schellenberg, because faith as assent is possible only because the faith-holder is responsive to

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[219] For a thorough discussion on the possibility of 'skeptical faith', see Ingolf Dalferth and Michael Rodgers, ed., *Skeptical Faith*, (Tübingen: Moer Siebeck, 2012).

[220] J. L. Schellenberg, *The Will to Imagine: A Justification of Skeptical Religion* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009), 2.

evidence, and faith exists in the space in between belief and disbelief. He says that "such faith does not remove one's doubt—one still believes neither ultimism nor its denial…"[221] If there is evidence against a religious proposition, then the subject needs to account for that evidence. Faith is not a belief but exists because there is a rational space between belief and disbelief. Faith exists alongside a doubt informed by evidence.

everal conceptions of faith discussed here so far share a similar responsiveness to belief, that is, when evidence points decisively against a proposition, then faith is either not possible or clearly irrational. lantinga offers 'defeaters' as evidence that doxastic faith is unwarranted, ames argues that one has a right to believe on faith when the situation cannot be determined on intellectual grounds; and udi says that if one disbelieves p then one cannot have faith that p. ecause these conceptions of faith are responsive to evidence and reason, at least insofar as what propositions are possible to take on faith, it seems faith is compatible with the wide evidentialism of the . seems not to hold because faith (in all the varieties discussed here) is responsive to reason, at least to the degree required by , even if not to the degree demanded by other epistemologies. owever, this does not necessarily answer , the challenge that faith does not require engaging in the social process of reason exchange. n doxastic accounts of faith, faith is a belief and is responsive to reason and evidence, and in nondoxastic accounts, faith exists within a window between belief and disbelief, and the size of this window depends on the evidence leading to belief or disbelief, which is to say, faith is indirectly responsive to reason and evidence. o, it may be that faith is voluntary in some cases, but, even then, it nonetheless has some restrictions on which propositions can be accepted. his also opens up a question of justification. f this faith window is dependent on evidence and reason for belief, then to what extent is one required to search for reasons and counterevidence to make sure the faith window is correctly placed? or example, ames says we have a right to believe when the matter cannot be settled on intellectual grounds, which indicates a need to attempt to solve the problem using reason first. ikewise, chellenberg says that we ought to be skeptical of religious propositions because of the reasons and evidence against (and lack of evidence for), and if we are not skeptical, then we ought to actively become skeptical. n the other hand, lantinga does not argue for a requirement to actively search out defeaters to maintain the justification of doxastic faith, only that when those arise, basic beliefs are responsive to them. o, faith may be (directly or indirectly) responsive to reason, but that does not mean that faith requires an active inquiry into counterevidence for its justification in the same way does. t least in the case of basic belief there exists positive evidence for the belief to be held, so searching for defeaters may be moot, considering a properly basic belief offers sufficient evidence for one to believe and seemingly offers a constant source of evidence (perceiving the truth of od in an ongoing way, rather than once, for example).

4.5.3 Faith as Acquiescence

This challenge to the PED is compounded in cases of faith where faith is nondoxastic, lacks evidence, and prohibits searching for counterevidence, such as Lara Buchak's account of faith as acquiescence. Buchak points out that religious faith and faith in ordinary use share three similarities: a relationship between the agent and a proposition, between the agent and an action, and between the proposition and the agent's evidence for it.[231] When a subject has faith in a proposition, that subject acquiesces to its truth, which is not always the same as believing it to be true, rather "having faith involves taking the proposition to be true, that is, 'going along with it'."[232] For example, setting down a weapon as an act of faith seems to be acquiescing to the proposition that other side will as well. Faith also involves the subject having some stake in the truth value of that proposition, such as marital fidelity or a car starting before a job interview—

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[221] Schellenberg, *The Will to Imagine: A Justification of Skeptical Religion* 4.

[231] Lara Buchak, "Can it Be Rational to Have Faith?," in *Probability in the Philosophy of Religion*, ed. Jake Chandler and Victoria S Harrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 225.

[232] Buchak, "Can it Be Rational to Have Faith?," 226.

the truth needs to matter to the subject. Faith also has a relationship to the subject's actions. If I lack faith that my car will start, then I will find alternative transportation, if I have faith in my spouse, then I will not hire a private detective to follow them around. To this end, faith can be context dependent and come in degrees. Moreover, faith does not require evidence, may exist even when the evidence suggests against the proposition, and faith seems an inappropriate description when the subject has conclusive evidence for something – Buchak says, "that a person has faith that *X* implies nothing about his evidence for *X*, aside from its inconclusiveness."[233] However, she makes a distinction between 'well-placed' faith and 'misplaced' faith. Misplaced faith may be cases where evidence is lacking or contradictory, for example, if one has faith that a friend will keep a secret despite repeated instances of that friend failing to keep secrets. In either case, her point is that faith goes beyond the evidence and that faith is related to some corresponding action. She endorses Kierkegaard's claim that one cannot arrive at faith by engaging in empirical inquiry, not because evidence cannot lead to or support faith (it can) but "because engaging in an inquiry itself *constitutes* a lack of faith."[234] If one has faith in their spouse, then one demonstrates a lack of faith when searching for evidence of infidelity (e.g., hiring a private investigator). Moreover, this lack of inquiry is required even when additional evidence is readily available (e.g., unsolicited, an investigator hands you an envelope with definitive evidence of possible infidelity). In this case, evidence must be declined.

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[233] Buchak, "Can it Be Rational to Have Faith?," 227.

[234] Buchak, "Can it Be Rational to Have Faith?," 232.

So, what matters about faith is the willful commitment to “an *act*, not a belief…regardless of what the evidence reveals.”[235] Faith is an act of the will, it is under the subject’s control.

On the question of rationality, Buchak distinguishes between epistemic rationality and practical rationality. A subject is epistemically rational when their credence (i.e., the strength or degree of their beliefs) is proportional to the evidence; however, faith exists when the evidence is inconclusive, and full belief is withheld. So, doxastic faith is irrational when it is considered a belief that is held with more or less credence than the corresponding evidence indicates, but since nondoxastic faith is not a belief, it is epistemically rational (it is not making a belief claim beyond the evidence—faith is a separate question from belief). But faith is not wholly unconnected to belief, since faith ought to be in proportion to one’s credences.[236] For faith to be practically rational, it requires two preferences to be met, a preference for option A over alternatives, and a preference for not seeking further evidence for the purpose of acting on decision A. For the first, if the utility of action A is higher than other actions, then preferring action A is rational: “one’s credence in *X* must be sufficiently high as to make *A* the practically rational act.”[237] For the second, faith is rational in cases where one avoids seeking additional evidence and there must be a calculation of the costs of seeking that additional evidence. Buchak offers two kinds of costs which may be important for religious faith: interpersonal costs and costs related to postponing a decision. For example, if searching for evidence that one’s spouse is

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[235] Buchak, “Can it Be Rational to Have Faith?,” 234.

[236] Adam J. Carter, Benjamin W. Jarvis, and Katherine Rubin, "Belief Without Credence," *Synthese* 193, no. 8 (2016). doi:10.1007/s11229-015-0846-6. There is a split between belief-based epistemologies and credence-based epistemologies. Carter, Jarvis, and Rubin offer a good explanation of this debate.

[237] Buchak, “Can it Be Rational to Have Faith?,” 237.

cheating results in the cost of damaging the relationship, then it may be rational to have faith while deliberately avoiding further evidence, or likewise, if one's relationship with God is damaged by searching for evidence for God's existence or goodness. In the second case, if one postpones the decision to search for evidence and effectively loses the option A, it may be too costly. For example, if one needs to drive a critically injured person to the hospital but lacks the belief that their car will make it, then postponing the drive on faith in order to give the car a tune-up would prove too costly (since the option to drive the person to the hospital before they succumb to their injuries is effectively lost).

Buchak's conception of nondoxastic faith as acquiescence is not an example of FO1, since FO1 argues that faith is nonrational and therefore, conflicts with BPS, but it seems as though Buchak's rational faith is arguably a stronger objection since she claims that it is rational to act on faith when lacking evidence and requires one to avoid inquiry. However, Buchak is arguing for specific cases of faith, not faith as a whole. Moreover, these cases are relatively limited and still depend on the evidence available to the subject, specifically, she says, "faith in *X* is rational only if the available evidence is such that no possible piece of evidence tells conclusively enough against *X*."[238] On the other hand, if the evidence is sufficient, then full belief is the appropriate attitude, not faith. Faith falls into a window of uncertainty but nonetheless requires credence based on evidence. In other words, subjects need "a high enough (rational) degree of belief in X…to the extent that the agent's belief in *X* is already based on a large amount of evidence."[239] So, even if faith is nondoxastic, faith is nonetheless responsive to

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[238] Buchak, "Can it Be Rational to Have Faith?," 246.

[239] Buchak, "Can it Be Rational to Have Faith?," 246.

evidence such that Buchak's nondoxastic faith seems compatible with BPS insofar as subjects are responsive to reasons and evidence whether in their faith or in their beliefs.

So far, this chapter has dealt with FO1 and FO2, and found that these objections do not hold because faith is responsive to reasons and supported by evidence and is therefore compatible with BPS; however, Buchak's argument that faith sometimes rationally allows or even requires avoiding inquiry supports FO3. FO3 argues that religious persons have an epistemic (or even moral) duty to avoid inquiry, and Buchak's description of faith seems to support this critique. To reiterate the conditions for this situation, acting on religious faith while avoiding inquiry for additional evidence is rational when 1. the subject has a strong credence (short of full belief) because they already have significant evidence, 2. the choice is momentous, and 3. inquiring for more evidence has a high cost. Buchak compares this point to James' claim that one has a *right* to believe when the choice is momentous. Choosing to postpone the faith-decision is akin to choosing against faith and losing out on an important opportunity. Furthermore, the argument of FO3 is that inquiring for more evidence is opposed to faith because inquiry can lead to false beliefs and misleading information. So, if inquiring for further evidence results in misleading evidence, then that may count as a high cost either by creating false beliefs, or by causing a postponement of a momentous decision to deal with this new information.

The PED is nonetheless compatible with this nondoxastic view of faith. Even if Buchak's conception of faith requires avoiding inquiry, that avoidance is only possible after a significant amount of inquiry is already complete. Faith is only rational when it is in proportion to one's

credences and those credences are evidence responsive. Belief is irrational when it goes beyond the available evidence, and faith can be rational when it goes beyond evidence, but belief and faith are both rational (or irrational) in relation to credences. Buchak explains that it is rationally permissible and sometime rationally required to have faith in God without looking for further evidence but only when the person already has significant evidence. For faith to be possible, reliable evidence must already exist. So, even in cases of nondoxastic belief where faith requires avoiding inquiry, the foundation of that faith is belief based on evidence, and that requires an open society.

4.5.4 Faith as Orientation

FO1 says that faith is nonrational but aims at truth, and FO3 says that faith is rational, aims at truth, and for epistemic reasons, requires the avoidance of inquiry. I propose another nondoxastic faith objection, FO4, that views faith as a precondition to all other beliefs, but this precondition is not properly described as true, and so does not require inquiry or proof. As a nondoxastic conception, FO4 views the function of faith, not as explanatory, but rather as orienting. Ingolf Dalferth explains that that the orienting function of faith is "holistic, plural and pragmatic." [240] Faith orients everything because "[t]o orient one's life by reference to God is…to place oneself in relation to the one without whom nothing else would and could be."[241] If God is wholly apart from this world, then there will be no natural explanation for God. Yet, God is

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[240] Ingolf U. Dalferth, "On Distinctions," *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 79, no. 3 (2016): 178.

[241] Dalferth, "On Distinctions," 180.

nonetheless foundational for all other beliefs because all things depend on God, "[w]ithout God, there would be nothing to study and nobody to study it. God is the one without whom nothing possible would be possible, and nothing actual would be actual."[242] Orientation therefore creates a frame for meaning. We need to orient and reorient ourselves periodically throughout our lives and especially when the ordinary gets overturned, like when we experience moments of evil or major change. We need orientating schemes to help us situate our place in it all. These orienting schemes have a practical function, we need these schemes to know how to act in the world. Moreover, we are not necessarily oriented or reoriented in the world by choice. The orienting function of the sun places us in the world and we do not need any further inquiry. Orientation sets the conditions for belief. If Peircean belief is explanatory, an exchange of reasons to justify the truth of a belief, then faith as orientation is not a belief and its object is not something that is true in the sense of being the best possible explanation. In this sense, faith does not need to be justified with reasons, in the same way the orienting function of the sun does not need to be justified with reasons, rather, it sets the conditions for belief, meaning, and action.

This conception of faith is challenging for the PED because it does not require inquiry, instead, it is the necessary condition for inquiry. The PED claims that to have moral beliefs, one first needs an open society in which to inquire to the truths of those beliefs. Faith as orientation places faith prior to the belief, and so faith does not require the open society in the same way that belief does. Orientation strategies are embedded in our traditions and cultures and we are born into them. An orientation strategy "order[s] the world for us in a meaningful way, and they must

[242] Ingolf U. Dalferth, *Radical Theology: An Essay on Faith and Theology in the Twenty-First Century* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2016), xi.

make it possible for us to find our place in this ordered world."[243] Faith is not an explanation of the world, but a way to situate ourselves in it. For Peirce, inquiry is the response to the irritation of doubt which then prompts the process of belief formation that includes the social process of reason exchange. Faith as orientation does not begin with a belief, and so it does not begin with doubt. Rather it is a 'concrete anchoring'.

Yet, since this concrete anchoring is not a belief, it is not a case of fixing belief, and it is not a dogmatic position that goes against reason and evidence. Faith as orientation is complementary to the PED. Faith as orientation does not create beliefs, it is a way to give our beliefs meaning. The PED is an explanation of an explanatory process. In contrast to Descartes, Peirce claims that our starting position is not a position of doubt but a position of belief. We begin by believing and do so until we experience a 'mental irritation', which we call doubt. Inquiry is that attempt to quell doubt by offering a better explanation of the world, one that fits better with the available evidence. But giving an explanation of the world is not the same as giving meaning to the world. Dalferth explains that when people turn to God, "they normally do not do so because they look for an explanation of something, but because they need to come to grips with the breakdown of their ordinary course of life in times of happiness or in times of suffering."[244] In other words, faith does not compete with belief, it complements belief by situating belief in the flow of life. The PED argues that democracy is a precondition for proper belief formation. If faith as orientation situates our beliefs, helps us create meaning, and is a guide to action, then democracy seems well suited for this orientation. The open society allows

[243] Dalferth, "On Distinctions," 178.

[244] Dalferth, "On Distinctions," 180.

us to determine this meaning, to orient and reorient as we see fit without interference. Faith orients our beliefs while democracy allows the conditions necessary for us to develop those beliefs. Thus, FO4 is not a problem for the PED.

4.6 Conclusion

The relationship between faith and evidence is closer than FO1 and FO2 describe. While doxastic accounts of faith may not adhere to the standards of belief justification within mainstream epistemology, evidence nonetheless plays an important role for the faith holder. Mainstream epistemology may find that the type of evidence supporting faith lacks warrant for justified belief, but the Peircean is not making a claim about what constitutes knowledge, just that we each have what we take to be the best reasons to support our positions. If the Peircean utilizes a ‘wide’ evidentialism, which includes religious experience, testimony, and scripture, etc., as justifying evidence for one's beliefs, then doxastic faith is compatible with BPS.

In some of the cases of non-doxastic faith, evidence is still influential on faith, if the evidence points conclusively against the faith proposition, then faith cannot exist. On Audi's conception of non-doxastic faith, faith exists within a window where there is neither conclusive evidence against nor conclusive evidence supporting belief. In this sense, faith is responsive to evidence because it must exist within a window of inconclusive evidence. Likewise, Buchak argues that faith is not a belief but nonetheless our credences (the strength of our beliefs) support our faith positions. In order to have faith we still must have a relatively strong degree of belief, just not to the degree of full belief; nonetheless, the credence is proportional to the evidence.

FO3 challenges the extent to which inquiry is required. It seems that faith is supported by reasons and is responsive to evidence. However, is it the case that to be epistemically justified one ought to actively inquire and test their own beliefs? Schellenberg agrees with this requirement and says that faith exists because the rational arguments against religious belief are strong and that we are obligated to question our own beliefs. Buchak argues that there are cases where it is rationally *required* to avoid inquiring for further evidence. However, those cases seem limited and the Peirceans argue it may be that all of our other beliefs commit us to democracy to the point that these exceptional cases are not a significant challenge to their defense of democracy. Nonetheless, FO3 is still a challenge to the PED, albeit it less of a challenge than its supporters purport it to be. In the next chapter, I will engage further with this criticism to see to what extent one ought to engage with epistemologies that conflict with one's own. Finally, I proposed another challenge, FO4, which claims that faith does not require inquiry because faith is a precondition to belief, faith orients belief. I found that faith as orientation is not contradictory to the PED, rather it is complementary because faith gives meaning to beliefs, it is not itself an explanatory process.

Chapter Five: The Cognitive Environment of Democracy

5.1 Introduction

The PED offers a justification of democracy via the social-epistemic conditions required for individual truth-seeking. By offering an epistemic rather than a moral justification of democracy, the Peircean seeks to avoid the problem of oppression which befalls accounts of public reason, while offering a substantial account of democratic norms, practices, and

institutions. In the previous chapter, I discussed the faith objection to the PED, which claims that the PED imposes normative epistemic commitments that can be reasonably rejected by religious citizens. I determined this objection to be less problematic than its supporters contend due to the reason-responsiveness of most accounts of faith, albeit assuming the PED takes what I referred to as a 'wide-evidentialism' – in other words, accepting as justifying evidence for belief what many mainstream (or non-religious) epistemologies may not. Assuming my defense of the PED holds, and religious and irreligious persons alike are committed to democracy via the norms of belief, the next question is to what extent religious reasons belong in democratic debate.

The Peircean is clear that a theory of democratic justification fails to be effective if it excludes religious reasons because such a theory can be reasonably rejected.[245] The Peircean also contends that the religious citizen has their own requirements of evidence and reason-responsiveness inherent in religious belief/faith, which in turn commits them to socio-epistemic democratic norms. However, the Peircean position is not entirely clear about the limits (or lack thereof) of the use of religious reasons in public debate. Considering the contentious nature of the debate over the use of religious reasons in democratic justification, it seems important to understand exactly to what extent the PED includes such reasons. Moreover, the PED bases a defense of democracy on the epistemic ability of democratic deliberation—the Peircean claims democracy is the best system in which to reach the truth. If religious reasons are brought into public deliberation, does that hurt or help the epistemic function of democracy? Or inversely, does democratic deliberation hurt or help citizens reach religious truths? Moreover, how can

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[245] See Cheryl Misak, *Truth, Politics, Morality: Pragmatism and Deliberation* (London: Routledge, 2002); and Robert B. Talisse, *Democracy and Moral Conflict* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

religious and naturalistic reasons commensurate when the grounding assumptions and vocabularies of each mode of inquiry are different? Peircean inquiry seems to presuppose the possibility of commensuration but the (rather important) details are missing. In other words, what is the Peircean view on the relationship between epistemology and hermeneutics?

In this chapter, I examine the role of religious reasons in the PED. I start by considering inclusive and exclusive readings of the PED and suggest for theoretical self-consistency that the inclusive view is the preferable option. What this means is that the content of reasons cannot be limited pre-deliberation, doing so likely imposes an oppressive doctrine, but ways of reasoning can be either limited or encouraged. Then I will discuss the challenges and opportunities of inaccessible, weak, and incommensurable vocabularies to democratic inquiry. I focus on the effect of the inclusion of religious reasons and conspiracy theories on the cognitive environment necessary for a properly functioning epistemic democracy. I suggest that there is a value to this sort of reasoning in inquiry. Moreover, it may not be possible to differentiate between useful and detrimental reasons in advance of deliberation, rather, it is only through deliberation that the epistemic value can be determined. If a wide variety of epistemologies coexist in public debate, how do these conflicting vocabularies commensurate in the process of inquiry? Does this require an extension or widening of the Peircean epistemology? Or is there room for hermeneutics? I argue that the PED ought to include religious and other inaccessible, weak, or incommensurable reasons in the public debate because in some cases it may be that those reasons are true, and we need the epistemic abilities of others to access those inaccessible reasons when we cannot.

5.2 Inclusive or Exclusive?

Talisse and Misak are both critical of liberal views of pubic reason that exclude religious reasons from public debate, arguing that pre-deliberative rules placed on deliberators constitute the imposition of an oppressive doctrine, which can be reasonably rejected. They argue that each person has their own internal reasons to stay committed to democracy based on the social-epistemic requirements of belief. Talisse and Misak sum up their position as follows:

> "…those who would turn their backs on democracy in favor of an autocracy, in favor of a religious hierarchy, or in favor of a might-makes-right regime, are failing to see that they betray their own practices of arguing, asserting, and defending their views, big and small. For as soon as one engages in the practice of giving and asking for reasons, one manifests one's commitment to the assessment of reasons and to the considering of reasons, whether they come from a powerless group, from the religiously misguided, or from the despised. One also manifests one's commitment to preserving a social-epistemic environment within which reliable assessments of this kind can be made. We hold that these epistemic commitments supply individuals with independent and compelling grounds for embracing democratic social and political conditions."[246]

Considering the Peirceans' rejection of the 'politics of omission' and their contention that our commitment to social-epistemic conditions is antecedent to our commitment to certain other religious or anti-democratic commitments (e.g. autocracy, theocracy), to what extent do religious reasons have a place in democratic deliberation? Whereas excluding religious reasons outright would make the PED an oppressive doctrine, citizens offering reasons to support an autocratic theocracy would be unacceptable because those reasons go against our socio-epistemic commitments. One possibility is that the Peircean sees this commitment to social-epistemic conditions as requiring us to avoid deliberating using comprehensive moral doctrines at all since

[246] Cheryl Misak and Robert B. Talisse, "Debate: Pragmatist Epistemology and Democratic Theory: A Reply to Eric MacGilvray," *Journal of Political Philosophy* 22, no. 3 (February 2014): 375-6.

laws based on comprehensive doctrines are oppressive to others. But could that mean our internal commitments to democracy entail a commitment to the use of public reason? Public reason liberalism says that we have a duty of civility to use public reasons, whereas the PED says that we have a duty to the social-epistemic conditions of society. But if this is the case, then this would simply be a way of sneaking public reason in through the back door, and the PED seems just as oppressive as public reason liberalism. It is not clear why this epistemic duty to social-epistemic conditions would be any less oppressive than the moral duty of civility because in both cases reciprocity between democratic citizens is required for us to achieve our own personal goals.

One reason to reject this view of the PED is that the PED is not primarily concerned with the moral implications of using moral, religious, or philosophical reasons. These reasons are only problematic if they 'block the way of inquiry'. This is not to say that the PED is not concerned with any moral dimensions of democracy – there is an implied moral dimension of the PED since to test out beliefs one needs to exchange reasons with others, and that requires viewing other citizens as epistemic peers and an open society where everyone has equal rights and freedom of speech, association, etc. So, these moral concepts are necessary because of their epistemic importance but are not imposed as *de jure* limits on the types of reasons allowed into debate. Viewing others as epistemic peers and securing equal rights is a matter of epistemic necessity, not moral necessity. Sharing reasons from one's own comprehensive doctrine is not problematic for what it is, unlike with moral accounts of public reason, which argue that it is immoral to use those reasons at all because it does not treat others with respect. Sharing reasons from comprehensive doctrines is only problematic for the PED if those reasons cause (or attempt to cause) some limitation on necessary epistemic conditions. For example, if one makes the

argument that the Bible supports term limits for U.S. senators, the public reason view likely argues that such a reason is unethical because others cannot see this *as a reason* due to its religious source, and if this law is adopted, the law is oppressive to those who do not share the same comprehensive doctrine. However, the PED is not concerned with the source of the reason, only if the reason helps or hurts the epistemic conditions necessary for one's own commitment to truth via belief. If Biblically-based term limits create better epistemic conditions, then it seems acceptable for one to offer such a reason. In other words, the PED is concerned with reasons that are epistemically oppressive, not morally oppressive. If a reason is epistemically oppressive, then it becomes morally oppressive, so, epistemic concerns underlay moral ones. When one offers religious reasons supporting theocracy, the problem is not that the reason is religious, the problem is that theocracy, if implemented, limits the ability for open deliberation, which hampers the search for truth for everyone, including the theocrat. So, the PED as a backdoor to public reason seems unlikely, since the PED is not concerned with the *content* of the reasons (i.e. religious/secular, public/private) but rather with the reasons supporting or inhibiting the deliberative process.

Even if the PED does not explicitly reject the use of religious reasons, in some cases the commitment to the socio-epistemic conditions of democracy will come at the expense of acting on certain faith propositions. This may be significantly more limiting to religious reasons in practice than the PED explicitly states. For example, is it acceptable to offer religiously based reasons against same-sex marriage or abortion? The PED says that part of our commitment to the epistemic requirements of genuine belief is that we must view our interlocuters as epistemic equals so that we take their criticism seriously and engage with their reasons properly. This entails a certain kind of cognitive environment that secures everyone's basic rights. But this

move from personal epistemic commitments that require viewing others as epistemic peers to a justification of certain socio-political requirements is not entirely clear. Does denying a woman the right to an abortion infringe on her epistemic abilities? Does denying same-sex couples the right to marry or adopt children impede their epistemic needs? Part of the challenge here is that in order to debate these issues, we need to deliberate with equal epistemic peers; yet, it may be that the issues being debated already have predetermined answers based on these required social-epistemic conditions. Maybe it is the case that in order to debate same-sex marriage equality, same-sex couples need the equal right to marry to then have the equal epistemic peer status necessary to deliberate the issue of same-sex marriage equality. So, while religious reasons are not rejected *de jure*, they may be rejected *de facto*.

5.3 The Democratic Value of Epistemic Vice

It seems that the Peirceans are willing to allow religious reasons into public deliberation (or any reason for that matter) so long as the reason does not infringe on the epistemic abilities of others. This is why reasons supporting a religious political authority are excluded but not reasons stemming from a religious authority to support political positions. Talisse stresses the importance of these social-epistemic conditions in proper belief formation, he says, "we have to be able to assess ourselves as functioning within a cognitive environment that is not systematically and severely distorted." [247] The cognitive environment of democracy requires basic protections (e.g.

[247] Robert B. Talisse, "Sustaining Democracy: Folk Epistemology and Social Conflict," *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy* 16, no. 4 (2013): 510.

freedom of speech, free press, freedom of association, freedom of conscience etc.) so that each person can freely engage in inquiry. The dialectical norms of reason exchange, responsiveness to evidence, and viewing others as equal epistemic peers leads to institutional norms of equal rights and freedoms. However, if it is the case that the PED is inclusive of religious and other reasons supported by a wide evidentialism, will those weaker, or less generally accepted reasons be sufficiently supportive of the required cognitive environment? Or does the wide inclusion of reasons create an environment that is less conducive to our epistemic needs? Misak's example below illustrates the trouble of including these reasons:

> "Sometimes it will appear that someone has no reasons at all for something he claims – 'He believes, for no reason, that he is being followed' or 'She believes in God but says that reasons are inappropriate and that one must believe on faith'. On the view I offer here, these propositional attitudes, if they are really not keyed to reasons, must also not be genuine beliefs…It strikes me, however, that we should not be quick to invoke this kind of explanation. The chances are good that there are reasons to which a purported belief would be sensitive. The paranoid might give what he takes to be evidence that someone is following him. And the theist might…offer reasons for her belief – she has had a spiritual revelation, or takes some great revelatory book to be keyed to the evidence."[248]

Misak agrees that the religious person and the paranoid both have their own reasons as to why they hold a belief, and those reasons are 'keyed' to what they take to be evidence, even if they do not appear to have reasons at all. So, if the religious person and the paranoid's beliefs are not caused by 'illness' or some 'failure of functioning,' and are responsive to what they consider to be evidence, then they hold a genuine belief. Their reasons can and should be used in public debate so they can properly inquire to the truth of those beliefs. But these examples raise a

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[248] Misak, *Truth, Politics, Morality: Pragmatism and Deliberation*, 75-76.

problem for the cognitive environment of democracy due to the accessibility, quality, and commensurability of the reasons being used.

First, in both examples, the subject may have what they take to be evidence for their beliefs, but that evidence may only be accessible to them. They might believe based on a subjective experience that is unique to them and requires their personal history to understand. In the same way an academic can pick up on the nuances of an argument, the religious person may be able to pick up on religious signs, and the paranoid person, having been followed and mugged before, may be especially attuned to warning signs of impending danger. Or they may claim to have knowledge to which others simply cannot get access, such as direct communication with God or a sixth sense. But this specialized or 'secret knowledge' may involve standards of evidence that are radically outside the norm. For the epistemic democrat, inaccessible reasons may block the path to inquiry because inaccessible reasons cannot be evaluated by others as reasons. If a reason comes from a special, private knowledge, then those without immediate or direct access cannot respond to that reason, cannot test it, and cannot test their own reasons against it. Second, it may be the case that the religious and paranoid persons are simply wrong about their beliefs and hold an initial belief that is based on bad evidence and demonstrates weak reasoning. Yet, it seems as though the Peircean has to accept those weak reasons in the cognitive environment in order for people to test the soundness of their beliefs. It may be that the weak believer revises their belief, but only after those reasons enter into the cognitive environment. All beliefs, false, weak, or strong, need to be tested by being exchanged publicly. But the epistemic abilities of some are going to be more developed, accurate, or reliable, at least in some situations, than others. False beliefs and weak reasoning may clog the cognitive environment with disinformation. Third, in order to engage and criticize reasons, interlocuters may need to find

some sort of common ground, some set of rules for how reasons and evidence ought to be evaluated, and so, reasons need to be commensurable, otherwise they are not able to be evaluated. But what if some reasons are incommensurable with mainstream or majority views? If inaccessible, weak/false, or incommensurable reasons are excluded from democratic deliberation, this may exclude a significant number of democratic citizens. If these reasons are all included, then it may be that the cognitive environment is no longer conducive to the production of good beliefs. The Peirceans are clear that the PED does not require that democracy actually achieve correct outcomes (as the correctness theories do) but that democracy sets the conditions necessary for proper belief formation and maintenance. What does the cognitive environment require?

5.4 Accessibility

A standard regulation in liberal approaches to justification is the requirement of the use of 'accessible' reasons.[249] Public accessibility requires that reasons offered must be available and reckonable by others. Inaccessible reasons, according to Greenawalt, involve "grounds that cannot be reasonably assessed by others…"[250] People need to be able to see for themselves why such a rationale is proper. Gutman and Thompson claim that reasons offered to justify public

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[249] For a detailed account of eight descriptions of the accessibility requirement, see Eberle, *Religious Conviction in Liberal Politics*, 252-286.

[250] Kent Greenawalt, *Private Consciences and Public Reasons* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 5.

policy must be accessible in two ways: reasons must be offered in debate in public venues, and reasons must be public in content, in other words, reasons cannot appeal to special knowledge (e.g. secular or religious revelation).[251] They argue that reasons stemming from religious authority cannot be included because "they close off any possibility of publicly assessing or interpreting the content of the claims put forward by the authority."[252] Religious experiences are troublesome for public deliberation because the information gained from such an experience is not open to all people, religious sources are unique to individual communities and construct a matrix for meaning. Religion, according to Abner Greene, is like a 'secret box' that contains information used for political purposes. Some people have access to this information, but those who do not must rely on the word of those who do.

Eberle uses Alston's Christian Mystical Practices as an example of this type of secret box thinking but argues that lack of accessibility to religious experience is no different than the layperson lacking understanding of scientific principles. Since actual citizens are less likely to understand complex arguments, but these sorts of arguments are necessary for proper democratic debate, a better view of the accessibility requirement is in-principle accessibility. An in-principle public accessibility requirement says that a reason must be accessible in-principle to any human if they develop the proper cognitive capacities.[253] Eberle argues that religious reasons stemming from religious experience are, in-principle, accessible to anyone who shares the same conditions

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[251] Gutmann and Thompson, *Democracy and Disagreement*.

[252] Gutmann and Thompson, *Democracy and Disagreement,* 70.

[253] Jeremy Waldron, "Theoretical Foundations of Liberalism," in *Liberalism*, ed. by Richard J. Arneson (Aldershot, Hants, England: Edward Elgar Publishing, 1992), 44.

for the experience. In other words, both the scientist and the religious person develop certain skills to obtain understanding. If one is open to the religious experience and has the necessary pre-requisite background, anyone, in principle, could have the same religious experience. Public accessibility is then a matter of possibility, not actuality, because, as Eberle says, “each (normal) human being is endowed with certain cognitive equipment—the standard package—that he shares with his fellow(normal) human beings…”[254] Despite the fact that different people have different socioeconomic opportunities and natural abilities, scientific knowledge is the kind of knowledge created by people using cognitive abilities they share with other normal people. So, those who do not actually understand the scientist’s argument, nonetheless, could understand it, given the right circumstances. On the other hand, a person who claims to be telepathic possesses an ability that is not normal, and their knowledge claims would be both in-actuality and in-principle inaccessible, and therefore unacceptable to uses in public debate. But is religious knowledge more similar to telepathic knowledge or scientific knowledge? Eberle says that he sees no reason to think that mystical perception is in-principle inaccessible like telepathy, he says, “surely it is possible in the relevant sense for *any* (normal) human being to perceive God, just as it is possible that any (normal) human being could have developed his cognitive capacities so that he can determine that the rationale for some complicated scientific theory is probative.”[255] An objection to Eberle’s position is that scientific knowledge does not require one to convert or otherwise adopt principles that are radically outside of one’s worldview. Science is,

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[254] Eberle, *Religious Conviction in Liberal Politics*, 256.

[255] Eberle, *Religious Conviction in Liberal Politics*, 260.

in that sense, available to everyone. But is that a fair comparison? It may not be any more reasonable to ask someone to learn scientific principles than it is to ask someone to convert to another religion to understand those religious principles. First, the worldview of the religious can be such that asking them to adopt scientific principles is asking them to disrupt their integrity, just as asking the secular to convert to religion violates theirs. Second, obtaining scientific knowledge is sometimes harder than obtaining religious knowledge. Religions generally do not claim that their religion is exclusive and closed to others—they are happy to help convert people—and for many religions, proselytizing is an article of faith. Meanwhile, getting access to education is increasingly more difficult. Universities are exclusive and expensive. One has an easier time converting to a new religion or joining a new religious community than getting access to college.

Kevin Vallier agrees with Eberle's claim that religious reasons largely conform to the in-principle accessibility requirement, though he argues that liberals ought to abandon the accessibility requirement altogether anyway. Vallier's view of religious belief (similar to my view in the previous chapter) is that religious beliefs are widely supported with reasons and that most people can understand a religious argument. Even if they reject the argument, "they certainly can evaluate the argument and come to see it as justified for others."[256] Religious arguments may rely on a different set of epistemic standards, different sorts of evidence, but not such that non-religious people cannot appreciate the argument. He gives the example of the anti-abortion advocate, who claims (in short) that God exists, God ensouls people at conception, and

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[256] Kevin Vallier, "Against Public Reason Liberalism's Accessibility Requirement," *Journal of Moral Philosophy* 8, no. 3 (2011): 378.

therefore, it is morally wrong to abort a fetus. The premise that God exists can be rationally demonstrated through proofs for God's existence or religious experience. The premise that God ensouls people at conception is outlined in scripture and tradition. The conclusion reasonably follows from these two premises. Vallier says that while this argument is not valid, it is nonetheless a rational argument, and each premise is easily understood by others, even though the premises are controversial. He explains that various formulations of the accessibility requirement describe interlocuters at different levels of idealization, with some views asking for reasons accessible to a purely rational subject in all their rational capacities, and some views asking for reasons accessible to actual subjects. Actual subjects do understand the religious arguments, despite disagreeing with those arguments, and if subjects' rational capacities are too idealized, then many secular arguments, normally considered fine in the public sphere, will also be rejected. Moreover, Vallier says that religious reasons are "epistemically symmetrical" to secular moral arguments insofar as both rely on premises that are either circular or based on testimony. Most people make moral arguments pointing towards the moral beliefs of people around them, societal norms, parental teachings, philosophers, or virtuous persons. Is there a difference between pointing to the testimony of Jesus in Bible and the testimony of Ghandi when it comes to how one ought morally to act? His main point here is that "the accessibility requirement either permits the use of religious reasons of many varieties or rules out too many secular reasons to remain plausible."[257] If Eberle and Vallier are correct that religious arguments

[257] Vallier, "Against Public Reason Liberalism's Accessibility Requirement," 388.

are generally understood by non-religious citizens, then it seems that accessibility is not a challenge to the cognitive environment.

5.5 Weak Reasoning and False Beliefs

The accessibility challenge can largely be dismissed because religious arguments are understandable, even if controversial, but a tougher challenge to the cognitive environment comes from arguments that are weak and reasons that are false. This is why Misak's example of the religious person is, I believe, less challenging to the cognitive environment than her example of the paranoid person. The religious person points to her evidence, revelation or scripture, which can be understood and debated, but the paranoid person seems to be reasoning poorly, using 'what he takes to be evidence'. In this way the paranoid person resembles a type of thinker that is increasingly more widespread and detrimental to democratic society: the conspiracy theorist.

A conspiracy theory is an explanation of an event that challenges an official narrative and involves the secret and nefarious actions of a small group of powerful people who keep their role in the event hidden.[258] Conspiracy theories are a good example of the challenge of weak reasoning and apparently false beliefs to an epistemic conception of democracy because conspiracy theories either rely on controversial evidence, or look at the same evidence as others and come to radically different conclusions. Conspiracy theorists are regularly categorized as

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[258] Brian L Keeley, "Of Conspiracy Theories," *The Journal of Philosophy* 96, no. 3 (1999): 116.

either crazy or simply reliably bad thinkers. Conspiracy theorists are notoriously difficult to engage because their evaluation of evidence is so far outside the norm, and they are willing to entertain explanations that most would reject outright. Cass Sunstein describes this feature of conspiracy theories as "self-sealing" because the way conspiracy theorists account for phenomena "make[s] it more difficult for outsiders to rebut or even to question them."[259] Conspiracy theories illustrate what Quassim Cassam calls "vice thinking." The conspiracy theorist demonstrates several intellectual vices such as gullibility, closed-mindedness, and carelessness.[260] Engaging with the conspiracy theorist is difficult because the vices you accuse them of having, they turn around and accuse of you. For example, when you accuse the conspiracy theorist of being gullible for believing a theory that lacks evidence, the conspiracy theorist then accuses you of being gullible for believing the official narrative.[261] Brian Keeley points out that this is a distinctive feature of conspiracy theories, that "evidence against the theory should be construed as evidence for that theory."[262] In other words, the more evidence is provided by governmental agencies, the free press, etc., against the conspiracy theory, the more the conspiracy theorist responds by enlarging the theory. The originally small group of conspirators now encompasses these 'fact-gathering institutions'. In this view, conspiracy

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[259] Cass Sunstein and Adrian Vermeule, "Conspiracy Theories: Causes and Cures*," *The Journal of Political Philosophy* 17, no. 2, (2009): 207.

[260] See Linda Trinkaus Zagzebski, *Virtues of the Mind: An Inquiry into the Nature of Virtue and the Ethical Foundations of Knowledge* (New York, NY, USA: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

[261] Quassim Cassam, *Vices of the Mind: From the Intellectual to the Political* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 73.

[262] Keeley, "Of Conspiracy Theories," 120.

theories are a direct challenge to any epistemic conception of democracy that requires at least some degree of confidence in the abilities and motivations of the free press and other democratic institutions. This challenge is compounded by the widespread and growing role of conspiracy theories in society (especially in the U.S.), which poses an imminent threat to democracy's cognitive environment.[263]

Cassam's response to this phenomenon is that conspiracy theories ought to be ignored. Whereas in most cases where we fail to understand or we disagree with a position, we ought to engage to clarify, but with conspiracy theories, Cassam says that we should not engage because "they are unlikely to be correct given the available evidence."[264] In his approach to intellectual vice, which he calls 'obstructivism', he emphasizes the consequences of the vice rather than the motivation behind the vice. In his view, vices are such because they have negative consequences on our ability to acquire knowledge, not necessarily because the vice-thinker has some moral failing. In other words, some (maybe most) conspiracy theories are offered in bad faith by paid actors. This is not an epistemic failure because these actors know that their theory is not true, and they offer it for the purposes of notoriety or money. The epistemic vice is of those genuine believers who take the conspiracy theories to be true and support the theory to others. In these cases, the failure is epistemic and not moral. For Cassam, the consequence, or reliability of the vice to obstruct knowledge matters more than the motive behind the person acting because vices

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[263] J. Eric Oliver and Thomas J. Wood, "Conspiracy Theories and the Paranoid Style(s) of Mass Opinion." *American Journal of Political Science* 58, no. 4 (2014); Richard Hofstadter, "The Paranoid Style in American Politics," *The Paranoid Style in American Politics, and Other Essays* (New York: Vintage Book), 2008.

[264] Cassam, *Vices of the Mind: From the Intellectual to the Political*, 37.

are not always motivated by ignorance. For example, closed-mindedness is a vice, but sometimes people are closed-minded with the intention to protect what they view as currently held knowledge.[265] And what may be considered a vice is not always vicious. For example, Cassam lists closed-mindedness as a vice, but if I am closed-minded to the arguments of the Holocaust denier, I am not thinking viciously, I should be closed-minded to such arguments. What makes something a vice is not that it is always a vice, but that it is *reliably* a vice, it is systematically vicious. Whereas being closed-minded to Holocaust denial is not thinking viciously, being closed-minded to most other things would be a vice, because being closed-minded limits one's ability to gain new knowledge and revise incorrect beliefs. If Cassam is right, then conspiracy theories ought to be ignored or at least not taken seriously because they *reliably* demonstrate bad reasoning and obstruct knowledge. Sunstein and Vermeule concur that "those who hold conspiracy theories of this distinctive sort typically do so not as a result of a mental illness of any kind, or of simple irrationality, but as a result of a 'crippled epistemology'."[266] It seems then that conspiracy theories block social inquiry and are detrimental to the cognitive environment of democracy. Hence, the PED should exclude conspiracy theories from democratic deliberation. However, I suggest there are reasons why the Peircean should not reach this conclusion.

One of the more famous epistemic arguments for the inclusion of objectionable reasoning in democratic deliberation is in the second chapter of *On Liberty* by John Stuart Mill. In discussing the benefits of a free press and free speech to the collective good of society, Mill argues that silencing an abnormal opinion, even if it is generally perceived as a false belief, robs

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[265] Cassam, *Vices of the Mind: From the Intellectual to the Political*, 5.

[266] Sunstein and Vermeule, "Conspiracy Theories: Causes and Cures*," 204.

more from society than from the person whose belief is being silenced. If the opinion is right, he says, then those who dissent from that opinion are "deprived of the opportunity of exchanging error for truth; if [the opinion is] wrong, they lose, what is almost as great a benefit, the clearer perception and livelier impression of truth produced by its collision with error."[267] This argument makes two separate claims. First, that excluding opinions because of the perceived wrongness robs society of what might be a true belief. Second, if the belief is false, then excluding it robs society of its ability to sharpen its own correct beliefs. To the first argument, if an apparently-false opinion is 'silenced', then society loses out on the benefit of that opinion if it happens to be a true belief. By 'silenced' Mill means an opinion rejected by an authoritarian system suppressing a voice, but in the context of the PED silencing means the self-policing of reasons offered in democratic deliberation for the benefit of the cognitive environment. Cassam's claim that conspiracy theories are reliably wrong may hold some weight against the first part of Mill's argument, if conspiracy theories are clearly wrong. Mill says that we should include wrong reasons if they "may possibly be true."[268] Assuming that conspiracy theories are always wrong—if they lack the possibility of being true—then it seems these theories should neither be included nor taken seriously. Yet, there are lots of conspiracy theories that turned out to be true (e.g. Watergate). But, these sorts of conspiracy theories are not what Cassam or Sunstein have in mind. They oppose what Keeley calls 'unwarranted' conspiracy theories (UCTs). UCTs display a level of vice thinking that justifies non-engagement because vice thinking is reliably wrong.

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[267] John Stuart Mill, "On Liberty," in *Utilitarianism and Other Writings*, ed. Mary Warnock (New York, NY: Meridian, 1962), 142.

[268] Mill, "On Liberty," 143.

UCTs fail to live up to basic standards of evidence, like the holocaust denier. Cassam says that "[o]nly the evidence can justify a policy of non-engagement, not the fear of having my mind changed by conspiracy theorists. Given the evidence I have no such fear."[269] If it is obvious which conspiracy theories are warranted and which are unwarranted, then Cassam's objections would not conflict with the first half of Mill's argument, but this difference is not immediately clear. Defining conspiracy theories as reliably wrong takes a backward-looking position. That a conspiracy theory is warranted or unwarranted is only possible after engaging with the theory. Keeley points out that "…it is impossible to reject even the more dubious secular conspiracy theories *a priori*, requiring us to adopt an agnostic stance until such time as the evidence begins to roll in…"[270] Likewise, Charles Pigden says that to define conspiracy theories as unwarranted is 'question-begging'. Moreover, he says, not only is it not epistemically vicious to be a conspiracy theorist, "it is intellectually vicious not to be a conspiracy theorist." [271] We should be skeptical of Western governments and critical of the narratives offered by corporate and partisan media sources.

A pragmatist argument for the inclusion of apparently-false opinions in public deliberation can be constructed from William James in his essay, "The Will to Believe." James responds to W.C. Clifford's argument that belief upon insufficient evidence is "always and

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[269] Cassam, *Vices of the Mind: From the Intellectual to the Political*, 37.

[270] Brian L Keeley, "God As the Ultimate Conspiracy Theory," *Episteme: A Journal of Social Epistemology* 4, no. 2 (2007): 146; See also M. R. X. Dentith, "Conspiracy Theories on the Basis of the Evidence," *Synthese: An International Journal for Epistemology, Methodology and Philosophy of Science* 196, no. 6 (2019).

[271] Charles R. Pigden, "Are Conspiracy Theorists Epistemically Vicious?," in *A Companion to Applied Philosophy*, ed. Kasper Lippert-Rasmussen, Kimberley Brownlee, and David Coady (Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 2016), 121.

everywhere wrong." James says that belief upon insufficient evidence can be rational if the belief doesn't contradict scientific or commonsense knowledge or logic, and the belief can help lead to the discovery of its own truth. The belief can be rational when "faith in a fact can help create the fact."[272] James has been criticized for offering a theory of truth that defines truth subjectively as what works for us or makes us happy.[273] Admittedly, James's language is, at times, sloppy and warrants that reading; however, a more nuanced view of his approach provides a valuable insight to the process of belief formation. Specifically, with his distinction between live and dead options. James defines a hypothesis as "anything proposed to our belief" and a 'live hypothesis' as "among the mind's possibilities." A hypothesis is dead when "we disbelieve all facts and theories for which we have no use"[274] Dead options are essentially inaccessible options but only inaccessible to those for whom the option is dead. For them, dead options are the end of inquiry. But what is a dead option for one may be a live option for another. Live and dead hypothesis are so in relation to the individual and are "measured by his willingness to act." Whether an option is dead or live is not necessarily connected to the truth or falsity of the belief. Live options can be wrong, and dead options can be right. Although, ideally, live options are live because they are true and dead options are dead because they are false. But James's point here is not that live options *are* true, only that the belief is still *possibly true* for the belief-holder. The possible truth of God's existence is a dead option to the atheist and a live option for the theist. Likewise, a

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[272] William James, *The Will to Believe and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 1956), 25

[273] See Bertrand Russell, *A History of Western Philosophy* (New York, N.Y.: Simon and Schuster, 1972), 818.

[274] James, *The Will to Believe and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy*, 10.

conspiracy theorist views a certain theory as a live option, even when most others see it as dead. The conspiracy theorist may therefore play an important role in society as one who inquires when others do not or in a way that others do not or cannot. Excluding conspiracy theories or religious beliefs from deliberation because of apparently-false opinions may also cut off possible truths to which only the conspiracy theorist or religious believer have access. James says, "*a rule of thinking which would absolutely prevent me from acknowledging certain kinds of truth if those kinds of truth were really there, would be an irrational rule.*"[275] James argues that the need for certainty should not be so great as to preclude possible truths for having a lack of provability. We should not be so afraid of committing an error as to risk losing a possible truth and good. James' point here is that it is irrational to avoid believing simply because one is afraid to hold wrong beliefs. Likewise, it may be bad for democratic inquiry to exclude apparently-false beliefs from deliberation because of the problem of secret box inaccessibility. It is precisely because some beliefs are inaccessible or dead to most people that society needs those who hold those beliefs as live options so inquiry can continue. Misak seems to support this point when she says, "what strikes the 'normal' intellect, or the scientific intellect, or even the best intellect around, as epistemically valuable is not guaranteed to be valuable."[276] There is something useful in keeping the door open to these types of hypotheses. The conspiracy theorist—like the believer of the God hypothesis—may offer a benefit to society or epistemology as a whole because they can look at hypotheses that are 'dead' to mainstream society and academia. It may be that for the epistemic

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[275] James, *The Will to Believe and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy*, 28.

[276] Misak, *Truth, Politics, Morality: Pragmatism and Deliberation*, 97.

benefit of discovering future Watergates, we ought to allow for some to keep conspiracy theories a live option in public deliberation.

Mill's second argument is that if the opinion is wrong, then society loses the opportunity to sharpen the collective deliberative process – the ability of democracies to collectively inquire towards truth. He asks: what is the worth of the manner in which true opinions are held, when that truth is "not freely and openly canvassed."[277] Is enough for a person to hold a true belief if they have no knowledge of the "grounds of the opinion, and could not make a tenable defense of it against the most superficial arguments."[278] False beliefs actually improve the cognitive environment of democracy by improving the deliberative abilities of the citizens. What is the use of holding a true opinion if one cannot defend it? This is especially important in the digital information age where misinformation is rampant, and skepticism of democratic institutions goes all the way down. Social media allows the creation of enclave communities where like-minded people share one-sided arguments.[279] When this happens, there is a failure to understand other points of view because of the widespread strawperson arguments presented within the enclave community. Moreover, while Mill presents the possibility that there are false and apparently-false beliefs, like Keeley's point about WCTs and UCTs, how can we tell if an opinion is false before engaging in the deliberative process? There are ideas that have been debunked, but those unfamiliar with the debunking information will nonetheless hold such an opinion until they

[277] Mill, "On Liberty," 161.

[278] Mill, "On Liberty," 162.

[279] Cass R Sunstein. *#Republic: Divided Democracy in the Age of Social Media* (Princeton: Princeton University Press), 2017.

inquire and find that information for themselves. If, on the other hand, an individual knows their opinion is false, then they have a duty to the cognitive environment to avoid sharing that belief. For example, the paid conspiracy theorist who knows the theories are false should, according to the PED, have personal epistemic commitments that lead to supporting a healthy cognitive environment, which means not offering those false reasons in bad faith. So, false beliefs offered in good faith ought to be included for the sake of the cognitive environment while bad faith false beliefs should be excluded.

However, Jason Stanley argues that Mill is mistaken about the realities of democracy, particularly in today's social and epistemic climate. The epistemic challenges to democracy are significantly greater in the digital age. He argues that conspiracy theories should not be included in democratic debate because when "…conspiracy theories become the coin of politics, and mainstream media and educational institutions are discredited…citizens no longer have a common reality that can serve as background for democratic deliberation."[280] In his view, conspiracy theories are a way to undercut truth in exchange for power and delegitimize marginalized groups and democratic institutions. Conspiracy theories attack the common reality that is required for deliberation because "[d]isagreement requires a shared set of presuppositions about the world."[281] In other words, widespread conspiracy theorizing destroys the cognitive environment of democracy. Without common ground, reasonable disagreement is impossible, and deliberation devolves into power politics and culture clash—the war of all-against-all.

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[280] Jason Stanley, *How Fascism Works: The Politics of Us and Them* (New York: Random House, 2018), 71.

[281] Stanley, *How Fascism Works: The Politics of Us and Them*, 69.

Again, the PED can respond to this criticism in part by arguing that bad faith conspiracy theorists have personal epistemic commitments to the cognitive environment of democracy, but the challenge brought by Stanley harkens back to Nagel's requirement of dialogicality for acceptable public reasons and the challenge of incommensurable vocabularies to the common ground of reality and discussion. So, even if the only conspiracy theories included in democratic deliberation are those made in good faith (which, I assume, would overwhelmingly reduce the overall amount of conspiracy theorizing in society), nonetheless, conspiracy theories, like religious belief, process evidence and reasons in vastly different ways, and the challenge of incommensurability is still a threat to any conception of epistemic democracy. In the last section, I will navigate the challenges and possible solutions to the problem of incommensurability.

5.6 Incommensurable Vocabularies

Stanley's challenge is that conspiracy theories can destroy truth by way of destroying dialogical commonality. Likewise, Nagel argues that religious beliefs are not proper for public deliberation because those beliefs cannot be criticized on common grounds. Nagel defines this dialogicality requirement, first, as a "preparedness to submit one's reasons to the criticism of others, and to find that the exercise of a common critical rationality and consideration of evidence that can be shared will reveal that one is mistaken," and second, as "an expectation that if others who do not share your belief are wrong, there is probably an explanation of their error

which is not circular."[282] This is a challenge to the PED because it is based on the expectation that each person needs to exchange reasons with others in a communal process of inquiry. While the PED does not require a singular conception of truth, and there is no expectation that deliberation will lead necessarily to truth, there is an expectation that reasons will influence the believer and beliefs will be confirmed, revised, or rejected. If this process of reason exchange requires some common ground, reality, or rationality, then what is to be done when reasons are incommensurable?

Within pragmatism, the problem of incommensurability is paradigmatically attributed to Richard Rorty, whose anti-foundationalist approach to epistemology spills into his political philosophy: liberal ironism. For Rorty, the history of Western philosophy is a misguided attempt to set foundations for knowledge and this largely reflects a failure to understand the historical contingencies of ideology. He utilizes the work of other neo-pragmatists to support his attack on analytic philosophy, specifically Seller's dismantling of the 'myth of the given' and Quine's identification of the two 'dogmas of empiricism'. In *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, Rorty outlines what he views as a strand of epistemic thinking that begins with Descartes and runs through Locke and Kant, that the human mind is capable of accurately mirroring the universe, in our own 'Glassy Essence', through mental representations. This view of the mind supposes that the universe is comprised of distinct and knowable things and knowledge of those essences "provides the master-vocabulary which permits commensuration of all discourses."[283] Rorty is

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[282] Thomas Nagel, "Moral Conflict and Political Legitimacy," *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 16, no. 3 (1987): 232.

[283] Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature, 30th Anniversary* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2009), 357.

critical of this view of the human being as a disembodied Cartesian ego, or what Charles Taylor calls the 'disengaged self'.[284] Rorty utilizes Thomas Kuhn's conception of incommensurability outlined in the *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* to support his rejection of traditional epistemology. Kuhn explains that the history of science shows that science goes through periods of 'normal' science, which is when new information is added to existing knowledge within a disciplinary matrix, and 'revolutionary' science where that matrix is revised to help reduce unexplained anomalies. This revolutionary view of science is distinct from a progressive, teleological view of science because in revolutions, something that was once explained can now be lost (Kuhn-loss), despite more problems being solved overall. With these revolutions comes 'paradigm shifts', a change in the way that (good) science is done. A paradigm is "an accepted model or pattern," and paradigms "gain their status because they are more successful than their competitors in solving a few problems that the group of practitioners has come to recognize as acute."[285] Paradigms shift during revolutionary periods, and because there is no overarching theory, no set of theory-independent rules to evaluate different paradigms, different scientific theories are in some cases incommensurable. Incommensurability, in this sense, refers to the lack of a common standard of measurement. Rorty appropriates Kuhn's view of incommensurability and applies it to epistemology. Critical that vocabularies are commensurable, he claims that it is wrong to assume that epistemic contributions can be "brought under a set of rules which will tell

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[284] Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

[285] Thomas Kuhn *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions Second Edition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), 23.

us how rational agreement can be reached on what would settle the issue on every point where statements seem to conflict."[286] Rorty defines epistemology as the attempt to "find the maximum amount of common ground with other human beings" but disagrees that "such common ground exists."[287] In this view of epistemology, all incommensurable ideas, ideas that do not fit within the dominant epistemic model, are simply considered non-cognitive, verbal, or temporary. Epistemology as a field is therefore exclusionary of the myriad ways in which humans communicate and attempts to close the discussion by finding the end of the inquiry—to finally 'get it right'.

Rorty puts epistemology in contradistinction to hermeneutics. Whereas epistemology supposes a rationality in which all contributions ought to be put into a proper set of terms to achieve agreement, in hermeneutics, to be rational is to avoid this common ground and "pick up the jargon of the interlocuter rather than translating it into one's own."[288] Hermeneutics does not presuppose any 'disciplinary matrix' which unites the citizens but rather keeps alive the hope of agreement through a continued conversation. Rorty suggests that in abandoning the foundationalism and the "quest for commensuration" inherent in epistemology, hermeneutics can offer, not a replacement, but rather the hope that inquiry can include incommensurable reasons. For Rorty, the problem of epistemology—the incommensurability of reasons and the goal of ending inquiry—is unsolvable, and the entire project should be abandoned. Objective truth is not

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[286] Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature, 30th Anniversary*, 316.

[287] Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature, 30th Anniversary*, 316.

[288] Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature, 30th Anniversary*, 318.

within reach and instead we ought to find ways to keep the conversation going. If knowledge is viewed as accurate representation of the world, then we will never achieve knowledge because to accurately represent a single thing we need "prior knowledge of the whole fabric within which these elements occur."[289] In other words, we can never avoid the 'hermeneutical circle', the challenge that to understand a part we need to understand the whole, but to understand the whole we need to understand all the parts. So, Rorty disagrees with the Diltheyan view that we can separate epistemology and hermeneutics into the 'science of nature' and 'science of man', fact and value, or knowledge and understanding.[290] Epistemology epitomized in the scientific method is just one vocabulary among many. For that matter, there is also no singular scientific vocabulary. Rorty points out that Newton's vocabulary helps us predict natural events better than Aristotle's, but that does not mean "the world speaks Newtonian."[291] No vocabulary expresses the real essence of the world. Truth is made, not found, because truth is a function of language and languages are made, not found. So, whether one is a scientist, poet, philosopher, etc., each is in the process of creating their own vocabulary, because "…there is no interesting difference between tables and texts, between protons and poems… these are *all* just permanent possibilities for use, and thus for redescription, reinterpretation, manipulation."[292] And if all vocabularies are created, then there are no non-circular vocabularies. The contingency of language goes all the

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[289] Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature, 30th Anniversary*, 319.

[290] For example, see Wilhelm Dilthey, Rudolf A Makkreel, and Frithjof Rodi, *The Formation of the Historical World in the Human Sciences. Selected Works, 3* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2002).

[291] Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 6.

[292] Richard Rorty, "Nineteenth-Century Idealism and Twentieth-Century Textualism," in *The Rorty Reader*, ed. Richard J. Bernstein and Christopher J Voparil (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 132.

way down, and in justifying our beliefs we ultimately rely on a "final vocabulary," the words we use that when doubt is cast upon them, we have no noncircular argumentative response – and Rorty calls those who are aware of this fact of contingency, 'ironists'.[293] Ultimately, we should abandon the search for epistemic commensurability because final vocabularies are incommensurable.

But is Rorty's view of incommensurability correct or even fair to Kuhn's original idea? Kuhn is notoriously vague in his use of the term and has revised the definition multiple times.[294] Richard Bernstein argues that Rorty's appropriation of Kuhn's incommensurability thesis is a "radicalized" version. Furthermore, the Rortyan interpretation of incommensurability is a "specter haunting multiculturalism."[295] Bernstein highlights three ways that Kuhn says competing paradigms "fail to make complete contact with each other's viewpoints." First, "their standards or their definitions of science are not the same."[296] Second, in paradigm shifts, "the whole conceptual web…had to be shifted and laid down again on nature whole."[297] Third, "the proponents of competing paradigms practice their trades in different worlds…the two groups of scientists see different things when they look from the same point in the same direction."[298]

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[293] Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, 73.

[294] See Howard Sankey, "Kuhn's Changing Concept of Incommensurability," *The British Journal for the Philosophy of Science* 44, no. 4 (1993): 759-74. www.jstor.org/stable/688043.

[295] Richard J. Bernstein, "The Specter Haunting Multiculturalism," *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 36, no. 3–4 (March 2010): 381–94. doi:10.1177/0191453709358551.

[296] Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions Second Edition*, 148.

[297] Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions Second Edition*, 148.

[298] Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions Second Edition*, 150.

Bernstein points out that throughout the various uses of ‘incommensurable’, Kuhn does not give a specific definition of it. Rorty appropriates Kuhn’s indistinct view of incommensurable scientific paradigms into a global dichotomy. But, Bernstein argues, this is misleading for two reasons. First, this picture of incommensurability is a picture of “windowless monads…so self-enclosed that there is no real communication, no real point of contact between them.” Yet, this is not the case. Paradigms or vocabularies may be incommensurable in some respects but are “nevertheless commensurable in some other respects. If this were not true, we would not even be able to do what Kuhn and Rorty are always doing – comparing different paradigms or vocabularies.”[299] Second, this picture of incommensurable cultures or vocabularies presents them as static, fixed entities and “neglects the extent to which any living language, any vocabulary, is intrinsically open.”[300] Bernstein’s insight here is correct. The view that cultures or vocabularies are incommensurable in the Rortyan sense, is both incorrect in its evaluation of the nature of culture and language—these are everchanging and mutable—and is dangerous in its implications. If cultures cannot deliberate verbally, then it seems violence is the only path left. Cultures or vocabularies may be incommensurable in the sense that there is very little common ground, but that supports the argument that we need to increase deliberation to create more cross-cultural understanding. If Bernstein is correct that cultures and vocabularies are fluid and dynamic, then deliberation does not just discover already existing common ground, it can actively create it.

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[299] Bernstein, “The Specter Haunting Multiculturalism,” 387.

[300] Bernstein, “The Specter Haunting Multiculturalism,” 387.

The challenge posed by Stanley and Nagel, of official narratives and conspiracy theories, public reasons and religious reasons, is that if society loses its common ground, then it loses the ability to critique, inquire, and solve problems. If reasons are incommensurable, then democracy devolves into power politics and war of all-against-all. Rorty intensifies this challenge by arguing that many vocabularies are incommensurable and there is no common ground in the first place. Furthermore, the search for a common ground is a multi-millennium-long failure of philosophy. We should abandon the search for common ground and objective truth and instead assert the superiority of our own liberal vocabulary, albeit with the ironic awareness that the liberal position is on no firmer ground than any other, it is simply the best because it is the least cruel.[301] The PED therefore needs to respond to the issue of incommensurability. There are clear benefits for the epistemic abilities of democracy when a wide variety of worldviews are brought into public deliberation, but that expansion of worldviews also includes an increased incommensurability.

The PED can respond to this challenge. Although the Peircean idea of truth as the end of inquiry certainly has a strong scent of scientific method, there are significant resources within Peirce's writings that suggest that he takes a wide view of experience that includes religious experience and that reasons are the result of interpretation, not mirrored essences. In this way the PED can overcome the epistemology/hermeneutic dichotomy Rorty presents. The PED is based on a conception of truth that is anti-foundationalist: truth as the end of inquiry does not suggest that there is some foundational way of knowing the truth by mirroring essences, rather that truth

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[301] Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, xv.

is defined by a practical function, when we inquire as far as we can on a matter, the irritation of doubt subsides. In this way truth is defined by our behavior rather than by correspondence to reality. We inquire because we doubt. Moreover, the PED places the onus of inquiry on the person inquiring, and truth is, in that sense, a personal matter but nonetheless with the objective dimension that justifying truth is a public activity and therefore requires others. So, the PED both encourages the search for truth within a vocabulary while also requiring the intercommunication of vocabularies. The PED does not need to abandon truth but can instead integrate a wide set of experiences and interpretations as part of inquiry. Truth as the end of inquiry is hermeneutical in the sense that truth is infinitely distant and so interpretation is a never-ending process. Reasoning and interpretation are not two separate processes, like the science of nature and science of man. Peirce says that "[e]very reasoning consists of interpreting a sign."[302] This process of interpretation requires a being in the world. We cannot interpret the world without being in it and our interpretations are molded by our past experiences and beliefs. We do not start from a position of doubt, we believe first, then we doubt, then we believe. The belief-doubt-belief cycle demonstrates an awareness of our situated selves; we interpret the world based on previous experiences in the world.

It is outside the scope of this chapter to connect Peirce's semiotics with this discussion of hermeneutics, and improper to describe Peirce's project as a hermeneutic, but Peirce does discuss issues and questions that are also taken up by hermeneutics.[303] Nonetheless, the point

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[302] C.S. Peirce, *MS* 654.

[303] For a thorough discussion see Vincent Michael Colapietro and Thomas M. Olshewsky. *Peirce's Doctrine of Signs: Theory, Applications, and Connections* (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1996).

here is that Peirce's conception of experience is broad enough to include interpretation – for example religious interpretation – as experience, and therefore, as part of inquiry aimed at truth, even if inquiry is defined in more scientific terms. Peirce characterizes experience as brute, it is "content which is forced upon one's acknowledgement without any reason or pretension to reason."[304] In fact, this brute experience is the foundation of the very process of creating hypotheses. In addition to induction and deduction, Peirce suggests there is another logical form: abduction. He says, "[a]bduction is the process of forming explanatory hypotheses," which then induction can prove to be true.[305] Abduction begins with the observation of "a surprising fact." But if A were true, then surprising fact C "would be a matter of course," so there is a reason to "suspect A is true."[306] Experience as brute force creates a basis for a wide variety of hypotheses, including religion and conspiracy theories. Religious experience can be surprising, especially for those who are not acculturated into a specific tradition (what C.S. Lewis called the 'surprise of joy'). Moreover, the God hypothesis can be a good explanation of some existing and surprising phenomena. Similarly, the conspiracy theorist identifies a surprising fact, what Keeley calls 'errant data', and hypothesizes an explanation that makes all the evidence fit in a unified narrative.[307] Considering experience as a whole is brute and specifically the experience of surprise is brute, hypothesizing seems less of a choice than a mental necessity. And so, with a wide variety of human experience comes a wide variety of hypotheses. We interpret our

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[304] C.S. Peirce, *CP* 7.623.

[305] Peirce, *CP* 5.172.

[306] Peirce, *CP* 5.189.

[307] Keeley, "Of Conspiracy Theories," 107.

experiences through our contingent vocabularies and inquire to the truth of these experiences by sharing reasons and trying to make sense of our surprising facts.

Incommensurable reasons are also in this way surprising. These reasons do not fit with the existing vocabularies and require further inquiry to make sense of the underlying experience. Rorty's challenge of incommensurable final vocabularies can be viewed as a roadmap to democratic inclusivity rather than a problem for public reasoning. Rorty says,

> "[i]f there is no such thing as common ground, all we can do is show how the other side looks from our own point of view. That is, all we can do is be hermeneutic about the opposition—trying to show how the odd or paradoxical or offensive things they say hang together with the rest of what they want to say, and how what they say looks when put in our own alternative idiom."[308]

In other words, engaging with those who have radically different vocabularies is a way to create a better understanding of the other, to bridge the gap between radically different experiences. Although here Rorty says we must interpret what the other says by viewing their reasons through our own vocabulary, Jeffery Stout argues that we instead ought to engage the other on their own terms. This practice of 'immanent criticism' creates a common ground, not by finding a common reality or a neutral space of reasons but by using their grounds as the common ground for the discussion and entering it.[309] Moreover, immanent criticism shows respect for fellow citizens. This is fully consistent with Peirce's view of inquiry as a process of social consciousness. His synechism has both a metaphysical side and methodological side. While the PED avoids tying

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[308] Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature, 30th Anniversary*, 365.

[309] Stout, *Democracy and Tradition*.

itself to Peirce's metaphysics, the methodological maxim that we ought to find connections between disassociated events and explanations is a principle that can help overcome the problem of incommensurable vocabularies. Joseph Esposito explains that

> "Peirce connected his synechism with his belief that thoughts are not generated by individual minds, but rather that individual minds participate in social thought, not only by always emerging in a given historical linguistic framework, but also by virtue of experiencing through musement and abductive inference the extra-mental generality that operates in the universe at large and shapes our thoughts and theories." [310]

So, it may be that the challenge of incommensurable vocabularies is not a blockade to the path of inquiry, but rather a challenge that inquiry ought to engage. When vocabularies appear incommensurable then inquiry continues. Misak seems to support this pragmatic inclusion of incommensurable vocabularies when she says,

> "We must not take for granted the system of epistemic value which is now taken to be the best. The open-endedness of inquiry and the commitment to taking other perspectives seriously must be preserved if we are to have any hope of reaching beliefs which really do account for all experiences and argument."[311]

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[310] Joseph Esposito, "Synechism: the Keystone of Peirce's Metaphysics," in *The Commens Encyclopedia: The Digital Encyclopedia of Peirce Studies*, ed. Mats Bergman and João Queiroz, 2014, http://www.commens.org/encyclopedia/article/esposito-joseph-synechism-keystone-peirce%e2%80%99s-metaphysics.

[311] Misak, *Truth, Politics, Morality: Pragmatism and Deliberation*, 97.

A ‘system of epistemic value’ seems comparable to a scientific or epistemic paradigm, but with a pragmatic tint to it. This is an awareness that what we find valuable today may not be so tomorrow. Inquiry applies to the epistemic system as well as the objects of that system.

5.7 Conclusion

The inclusion of religious experience, conspiracy theories, and other inaccessible, weak, and incommensurable reasons pose a challenge to the cognitive environment of democracy and thus, to an epistemic conception of democracy. If reasons are inaccessible as reasons, then interlocuters cannot engage in mutual inquiry. If reasons are false or reasoning is weak, then the cognitive environment will be full of misinformation and inquiry will be significantly burdened. If reasons are incommensurable, then there is no common ground or standards to compare and evaluate reasons. If the PED excludes these types of nontraditional reasons, then many citizens will also be excluded, and the PED fails to justify democracy to its constituents. If the PED is inclusive of these reasons, then the justificatory function of the cognitive environment is impeded because the cognitive environment is distorted. This dilemma needs to be addressed.

In this chapter I argued that between these two options, the solution seems to be inclusion and engagement rather than exclusion. Engaging with these nontraditional forms of reasoning is a requirement of proper believing. Excluding these beliefs based on *prima facie* appearance runs the risk of excluding beliefs that can benefit the epistemic function of democracy. Our own beliefs can benefit from the struggle to attain understanding of the other. To be justified in thinking our beliefs are true beliefs—that we have the best reasons and evidence—we must engage with the strangeness of other beliefs that not only contradict our own positions, but also

employ evidence and experience that is radically different than our own, even (or especially) if it is outside the general norms of reasoning. Furthermore, varying sources of evidence and types of reasoning can provide new support to our own beliefs, or proper correctives. This utilizes the interpretive power of others and their ability to inquire into live options that are dead to us. They can inquire where we cannot, and those insights can help our own truth projects. Moreover, including religious reasoning creates a robust public deliberation, the lack of which is a serious practical challenge to global democracies today. I will discuss some practical implications of this inclusivity in the final chapter.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

6.1 Summary

The Peircean Epistemic defense of democracy offers a promising way forward in the justification of democratic norms, practices, and institutions considering the fact of reasonable pluralism. As I outlined in the second chapter, the drawback to the approach of public reason liberalism is twofold: first, the requirement of public reasons likely excludes a significant number of citizens for whom public reasons are not possible, and second, the public reason approach exchanges truth for reasonableness, which negates the epistemic functions of democracy as a system to identify and solve social problems. If, by and large, moral

justifications for democracy like the public reason approach can be rejected by citizens for imposing a moral view with which citizens can reasonably disagree, it follows that a non-moral justification for democracy might be worth a look. In the third chapter, I evaluated a variety of epistemic justifications for democracy and found that those views offer significant benefits to democratic theory. For example, correctness approaches, like the CJT and DTA theorems explain that the epistemic power of democracy is increased when debate includes a wide variety of citizens and more so when the citizens are more diverse. In this view, pluralism is not a challenge to overcome but a resource to help create better solutions to social problems. Though, the drawback to these correctness approaches as a justificatory approach is that these instrumental or substantive-outcome views of democracy do not offer sufficient reason for all citizens to stay committed to democracy. In other words, while democracy can create better answers to problems, it is not clear why those who disagree with those answers ought to stay committed to those democratic outcomes.

Of the epistemic theories I canvassed, I suggested the Peircean epistemic defense offers the best balance of the epistemic powers of democracy while also providing justificatory reasons for continued democratic participation. The PED offers sufficient reasons for citizens to stay committed to democracy based on each person's personal commitment to truth and the socio-epistemic requirements inherent in holding a belief. Beliefs aim at truth and to be justified in holding a belief one must inquire into the truth of that belief by exchanging reasons in an open society. In this way epistemic commitments underlay moral ones. To hold that a moral belief is true, we need a society that allows for proper belief formation and social inquiry. Non-democratic societies do not allow for this open exchange of reasons. The same principle applies to religious beliefs. To be able to practice one's religion and form reliable religious beliefs, one

needs a society that provides the epistemic conditions in which to freely form and test those beliefs. However, as I discussed in the fourth chapter, the ‘faith objection’ challenges the PED based on the assumption that religious belief does not require reason responsiveness and that religious belief is not properly a belief but rather faith, which does not follow these norms of belief formation and maintenance. The faith objection claims that because faith does not operate within the norms of belief proscribed by the PED, the PED fails to defend democracy for the faith holders. Rather than the PED being inclusive to religious belief, the PED excludes it by imposing an epistemic comprehensive doctrine that can be reasonably rejected. I found the faith objection to be overstated. An analysis of various philosophical and theological approaches to religious belief and faith shows that most approaches do include reason and evidence responsiveness. If the evidentialism of the PED is taken to be ‘wide’ in the sense of inclusive of evidence from religious experience or emotions, then religious faith holders are as committed to the open society just as any other citizen.

In the fifth chapter, I evaluated the implications of this radical epistemic inclusivity. My concern is that if a wide evidentialism is implied in the PED, the weak and inaccessible reasons that justify individual beliefs may hurt the cognitive environment of democracy. While the correctness of solutions reached by democratic deliberation is not necessary for the justification of democracy, nonetheless the PED relies on the epistemic abilities of a democratic society. If that environment is corrupted with false reasons, beliefs based on weak evidence, and incommensurable reasons, then inclusivity undercuts epistemic concerns and the PED fails. By looking at the inaccessible and weak reasoning displayed in conspiracy theories, I determined that beyond being difficult to identify an unwarranted conspiracy theory, it may be that conspiracy theorists and others who hold inaccessible reasons as live options play an important

epistemic role in society. Challenging the epistemic status quo is likely useful in the collective search for truth.

In this dissertation, I suggested that the PED is a promising theory of democratic justification that takes pluralism seriously as a resource rather than a challenge to overcome. I countered those criticisms of the PED that claim the PED is too thick because it imposes epistemic norms that can be reasonably rejected by religious believers. I argued that the inclusivity of the PED provides challenges to the cognitive environment of democracy, but that inclusivity also offers potential avenues to truth that may otherwise go undiscovered.

6.2 Practical Implications of Epistemic Inclusivity

Epistemic inclusivity is especially necessary now as the rise of far-right populism poses one of the toughest challenges to the deliberative character of democracy on a global scale.[312] Far-right populism poses an epistemic challenge to democracy in at least three ways. First, populism is a threat to democratic deliberation insofar as populists claim to speak for "The People" but "The People" are usually defined through an ethno-nationalist lens. Jan-Werner Müller, explains that this use of "The People" is dangerous because populists "speak and act *as if* the people could develop a singular judgment, a singular will, and hence a singular,

[312] Populist parties are highly influential in Western politics and recently have had significant legislative and electoral successes, for example, the Tea Party in the United States, the Front National in France, the Lega Nord in Italy, the Swiss People's Party (SVP), Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ), the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP), Law and Justice in Poland (PiS), and the Party for Freedom (PVV) in the Netherlands.

unambiguous mandate."[313] This is a direct challenge to the epistemic function of democracy by closing the debate and intimidating dissenters. Second, populism defines who should be part of the *demos* and who does not. By intentionally creating a mentality of a good "Us" versus a bad "Them," populism places ethnic minorities, elites, and cosmopolitans as 'other' to the nationalist cause. As Daniele Albertazzi and Duncan McDonnell explain, populism "pits a virtuous and homogeneous people against a set of elites and dangerous 'others' who are together depicted as depriving (or attempting to deprive) the sovereign people of their rights, values, prosperity, identity and voice."[314] By discrediting the voices of these alleged 'others', populism devalues the reasons those people offer. If we do not need to take seriously the reasons of others, then we lose out on their criticism, and our own (wrong or weak) beliefs will go unchallenged. Third, populism limits the rights of those who participate in democratic deliberation. Populists use democracy as more of a bludgeon, leveraging a majority rule to impose illiberal policies—a system of democracy that the Hungarian authoritarian, Viktor Orbán, endorses as 'illiberal democracy' or what Jan-Werner Müller calls a 'deranged democracy'. This is a democracy that is opposed to the very pluralism it is intended to protect and limits that pluralism through exclusive policies, such as immigration control, limiting religious freedom of minorities, and voting rights. The limiting of equal rights directly impacts the ability to share reasons and lessens the effectiveness of the cognitive environment. This becomes a global rights crisis as populists are also widely opposed to the idea and implementation of international human rights.

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[313] Jan-Werner Müller, *What Is Populism?* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), 77.

[314] Daniele Albertazzi and Duncan McDonnell, *Populists in Power* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2015), 5.

The relationship between religion and populism is dangerous for the epistemic function of democracy and needs a counterbalance. Although it seems that religious citizens would not desire to throw in with the mostly secular populists, populism is largely ambivalent to religion and for that reason it is able to take religious identity and fuse it with nationalist identity. For populists, "The People" are defined less by ideology and more so by identity. Combining religious identity and national identity is a way for secular populists to secure religious support. Olivier Roy argues that "religion matters first and foremost as a marker of identity, enabling them to distinguish between the good 'us' and the bad 'them'."[315] This can be demonstrated by the joining of forces between Christians and far-right populists in their opposition to Muslims and what they view as the threat of Islamification. Roy explains that populist movements are "Christian largely to the extent that they reject Islam."[316] DeHanas and Shterin claim that populism uses religion as a way to be "almost entirely identitarian and negative: it is about what distinguishes the 'civilised' western societies from 'barbaric' Muslims."[317] Together this religious-populist movement has seen legislative success in banning the construction of minarets and mosques, wearing the hijab in public spaces, religious slaughtering methods, and Muslim immigration. By limiting expressions of religion, populists seek to remove minorities from the *demos* and limit their influence.

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[315] Olivier Roy, "Beyond Populism: The Conservative Right, the Courts, the Churches and the Concept of a Christian Europe," in *Saving the People: How Populists Hijack Religion*, eds. Nadia Marzouki, Duncan McDonnell, and Olivier Roy (London: Hurst and Publishers, 2016), 186.

[316] Roy, "Beyond Populism: The Conservative Right, the Courts, the Churches and the Concept of a Christian Europe," 186.

[317] Daniel Nilsson DeHanas and Marat Shterin, "Religion and the Rise of Populism," *Religion, State and Society* 46, no. 3 (2018): 178.

The implications of my thesis have a direct correspondence to the epistemic challenge posed by populism. A pluralist Peircean epistemic conception of democracy offers a way out of the populist-religious identity relationship. The Peircean epistemic approach that I have advocated in this dissertation promotes the use of religious reasons in the public sphere and offers a path to break with populism while maintaining religious identity. An inclusive epistemic approach to democracy incorporates religious resources to support the functioning of democracy and to solve social problems. If the left follows the liberal public reason route, while the antidemocratic far-right populists are willing to bring in and appropriate religion, albeit for their own purposes, then religious groups will choose the latter. Cornet West explains this failing succinctly:

> [I]n these days of global religious revivals, progressive forces are reaping the whirlwind. Those of us who remain in these religious channels see clearly just how myopic such an antireligious strategy is. The severing of ties to churches, synagogues, temples, and mosques by the left intelligentsia is tantamount to political suicide…[318]

There are significant resources within religion that support democratic positions and vice versa. Democracy needs an inclusive multiculturalism rather than a secular multiculturalism. An inclusive epistemic conception of democracy offers more epistemic resources and increases democratic participation. Religious traditions have embedded cultural knowledge that can help create a more robust democratic public sphere. By incorporating religious reasons into the public debate, democracies can harness the epistemic powers of pluralism. An inclusive epistemic

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[318] Cornel West, *The American Evasion of Philosophy* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press 1989), 234

conception of democracy both harnesses the epistemic powers of diverse communities and creates a space for including religious citizens.

6.3 Opportunities for Future Research

This inclusive view of the PED creates new challenges that are beyond the scope of this dissertation but warrant additional research. First, while the PED is not too thick, it may be that it is too thin. The PED places epistemic reasoning as a predicate to moral reasoning, which does not place epistemic reasoning as a more important concern but an underlying concern for proper moral reasoning; however, by excluding justice from democracy, it seems that the PED is opening the door to cases of injustice. For example, deliberative inclusivity includes, to some degree, hate speech. While I explained in the fourth chapter that reasoning which leads to exclusion of others as democratic citizens is not acceptable because it hampers the cognitive environment of democracy, that does not mean that all hate speech is excluded. Talisse claims that to engage in proper inquiry we need to view our interlocuters as epistemic peers, but it is not clear exactly what our epistemic responsibilities are when faced with speakers who challenge the epistemic or moral standing of others. For example, are Ann Coulter or Peter Singer failing to include Muslims or the disabled as epistemic peers if they denounce the societal value of these groups? Does the (alleged) hate-speech of Coulter or Singer mean that campuses should ban them from giving public talks? If the PED argues for inclusivity for the sake of truth, then does the epistemic benefit of hate speech outweigh the requirements of justice? The PED needs to clarify how it might deal with the challenges presented by the debate between free speech and hate speech. If the PED offers a public sphere that is neutral to hate speech, then does the PED

offer a theory that would, given the practical realities of society, perpetuate oppression towards historically marginalized groups? The ‘epistemic peers’ clause in the PED may help exclude some hate speech but not all of it.

Second, along a similar line, the PED is an ideal theory, which leads to at least two problems. First, as Charles Mills has pointed out, ideal theory fails to take seriously the realities of racial injustice inherent in actual societies.[319] Ideal theories presuppose ideal institutions, cognitive abilities, and equal opportunities and so, ideal theories are silent on oppression and concrete injustices. This is a tough challenge to the PED. Does the assumption that our beliefs commit us to viewing others equally as epistemic peers therefore motivate us to *actually* act as if other people are our equal peers? Human nature seems significantly more vicious than the PED’s idealized interlocuter implies. Second, an ideal theory that is also pragmatist appears contradictory. If the point of pragmatism is to connect theory with action, can a pragmatist political theory be ideal? Specifically, if we are committed to democracy via the norms of belief, but no one is actually committed to democracy via the norms of belief, then what efficacy does this theory have? Can the PED be useful in actual democracies if it is ideal? Or is this problem of justification simply, as Dewey says, a problem of philosophy and not a problem of men?

Third, even if the Peirceans’s suggestion that the requirement to view others as our epistemic peers does commit us to morally equality, it only does so with those whom we can communicate and share reasons. This last objection has been applied similarly to Kant’s categorical imperative and the connection between dignity and rationality. If I am committed to

[319] Charles W. Mills, “‘Ideal Theory’ as Ideology,” *Hypatia* 20, no. 3 (2005).

the moral well-being of others because I need them for my own truth project, then I am not committed to any moral protections for those who are epistemically useless to me. This has implications for people with disabilities, animals, and nature. Maybe I have an epistemic need to protect endangered species of plants and animals for future study, but for the millions of animals killed for food and clothing, the PED does not seem to offer any foundation for protection. In fact, it may be that animals are largely only epistemically useful for medical research. For some people with disabilities that cannot communicate, cannot exchange reasons, does their epistemic inabilities cause a loss of moral status? It seems like the PED is taking the view that other people are only instrumentally valuable.

A theory that fails to answer these questions may be too thin to sufficiently justify our commitment to democracy. The Peirceans are clear that the PED is minimal in the sense that it offers a bare minimum of reasons to support democracy, and they refuse to take hard positions on what a Peircean democratic system looks like in detail. But there is room to grow. They are also clear that the PED is not incompatible with a theory of justice, only that theories of justice presented so far are by and large reasonably rejectable. The PED needs to delineate what reasons are included and excluded so there is clarity on some of these issues of justice. A theory that is thin enough to include most democratic citizens is commendable, but if too much is included—if the theory is too thin—then the PED will fail the requirements of justice. While there cannot be justice without truth, truth without justice is insufficient for a democratic society.

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