

RAWLS AND DEWEY ON DEMOCRACY, PLURALISM, AND THE PERSON

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ABSTRACT

John Rawls and John Dewey are among the most influential philosophers. Although some aspects of Rawls's and Dewey's philosophical positions have been discussed previously by some scholars, those critical studies have compared Dewey's ideas with the ideas of Rawls while focusing on Rawls's earlier work, *A Theory of Justice*. Different from the previous studies, this paper reexamines the two philosophers' ideas within the limits of political liberalism as framed by Rawls's later work, *Political Liberalism*, while focusing on the two philosophers' discussions about the concepts of democracy, pluralism, and the person.

KEYWORDS

Rawls, Dewey, Political Liberalism, Democracy, Pluralism, Person, Education.

1. INTRODUCTION

Both John Rawls and John Dewey are among the most influential philosophers, in the fields of political philosophy and philosophy of education. On the one hand, Dewey has not only been a leading figure in the movements called pragmatism in philosophy and progressivism in education, but has also been a prominent political philosopher with his contribution to democratic theory. He conceived of philosophy as the general theory of education. His *Democracy and Education* has been one of his most influential works.¹ Rawls, on the other, has dominated the discussions about justice since the publication of his *A Theory of Justice*² in 1971.³ *Political Liberalism*,⁴ in addition, developed Rawls's version of

¹ John Dewey, *Democracy and Education* (Middlesex: Echo Library, 2007/1916).

² John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971). *Theory* hereafter.

liberalism, a novel method in which principles of justice are justified without committing to any comprehensive doctrine, and has become another seminal work in philosophy.

While Dewey's contribution to the field of philosophy of education is obvious and direct, Rawls's contribution appears to be indirect, but significant at the same time. This results mainly from the fact that Rawls provides a limited discussion about the structure and role of education in a well-ordered society, because Rawls believes that a well-ordered society educates its citizens through their participation in the public political culture of such society. Considering Rawls's focus on well-ordered or developed liberal democracies, it is understandable why he does not provide a detailed discussion about education in general, but limits it entirely to politics. However, some Rawlsian scholars have found Rawls's treatment of education insufficient and provided perspectives on which citizens of a well-ordered society are to be educated. Rawls's indirect contribution to the discussions in the field of philosophy of education has been highlighted by the observation that scholarly discussions about citizenship education has been Rawls-centric between the years 1990 and 2010.⁵

Previously, different scholars have developed various politically liberal approaches to education, focusing on both developed and developing democratic pluralistic societies.⁶ However, while scholars have provided philosophical discussions about, for example, whether a genuinely political approach to education can be developed, how a politically liberal education can be put into practice, and what elements need to be included in curriculum, no specific account of politically liberal education has been supported by a discussion about the pedagogical approach to be adopted by a politically liberal society. This very issue, indeed, provided this study with a starting point for considering the possibility of advancing a politically liberal educational account by using a Deweyan pedagogical perspective. However, before delving into a discussion of this possibility, a fundamental con-

³ Harry Brighouse, *Justice* (Malden: Polity Press, 2004); Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* (New York: Basis Books, 1974).

⁴ John Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993).

⁵ Christian Fernández and Mikael Sundström, "Citizenship Education and Liberalism: A State of the Debate Analysis 1990-2010," *Studies in Philosophy and Education*, Vol. 30, (2011), pp. 363-384.

⁶ See, for example, Barry L. Bull, "A Politically Liberal Conception of Civic Education," *Studies in Philosophy and Education*, Vol. 26, No:6, (2008), pp. 449-460; Barry L. Bull, B. L. "A Sketch of Politically Liberal Principles of Social Justice in Higher Education," *Philosophical Studies in Education*, Vol. 43, (2012), pp. 26-38; David A. Reidy, "Education for Citizenship in a Pluralist Liberal Democracy," *The Journal of Value Inquiry*, Vol. 30, (1996), pp. 25-42; Raşit Çelik, "A Politically Liberal Conception of Formal Education in a Developing Democracy," *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, Vol. 48, No:5, (2016), pp. 498-508; Raşit Çelik, "Curriculum Elements of a Politically Liberal Education in a Developing Democracy," *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, Vol. 48, No:14, (2016), pp. 1464-1474; Stephen Macedo, "Liberal Civic Education and Religious Fundamentalism: The Case of *God v. John Rawls?*," *Ethics*, Vol. 105, No:3, (1995), pp. 468-496.

sideration needs to be taken into account, namely whether Dewey's ideas and Rawls's political liberalism can provide a reliable common ground on which a Deweyan-Rawlsian educational approach can be developed.

In fact, some previous studies on the philosophies of Dewey and Rawls argue that the two have different and incompatible philosophies. For example, Betty A. Weitz focuses on the question of educational equality and argues, after a comparison between Rawls's and Dewey's perspectives and consideration of Rawls's principles of difference and redress, that the two necessitate different educational practices and policies.⁷ Eric T. Weber, in addition, argues that Rawls and Dewey have fundamentally incompatible perspectives because Rawls discusses education in an idealized society and Dewey discusses education in terms of people's participation in the construction of justice.⁸ James S. Johnston, while discussing the version of liberalism supported by Habermas and its educational implications, argues that Habermas's position is located somewhere between Dewey and Rawls, which places the former on one extreme and the latter on the opposite.⁹ Contrary to the mentioned studies, Melvin L. Rogers, in his response to the argument that the Deweyan notion of democracy is incompatible with Rawls's concept of a reasonable pluralism, argues that for Dewey plurality is invaluable in realizing a democratic society.¹⁰

Although some aspects of Rawls's and Dewey's philosophical positions have been discussed, those critical studies examine some basic ideas of Dewey and Rawls and compare Dewey's ideas with Rawls's ideas presented primarily in *Theory*. However, a political version of liberalism offers a different perspective in justifying a theory of justice, including Rawls's own presented in *Theory*. In fact, Rawls developed his version of liberalism in *Political Liberalism* as a response to the internal problems found in *Theory*. *Political liberalism* explains how any theory of justice, including Rawls's own justice as fairness, can be justified and become stable for the right reasons. In this regard, Rawls's earlier and later work present some significant differences, which I shall discuss in the following section. As Richard Rorty stresses, Rawls's later work helped theorists realize that while Kantian elements were being overemphasized, Deweyan elements were underemphasized in interpretations of Rawls's theory.¹¹ With this in mind, different from the previous studies, this study aims to re-examine Rawls and Dewey within the limits

⁷ Betty A. Weitz, "Equality and Justice in Education: Dewey and Rawls," *Human Studies*, Vol. 16, No:4, (1993), pp. 421-434.

⁸ Eric T. Weber, "Dewey and Rawls on Education," *Human Studies*, Vol. 31, No:4, (2008), pp. 361-382.

⁹ James S. Johnston, "Schools as Ethical or Schools as Political? Habermas between Dewey and Rawls," *Studies in Philosophy and Education*, Vol. 31, (2012), pp. 109-122.

¹⁰ Melvin L. Rogers, "Dewey, Pluralism, and Democracy: A Response to Robert Talisse," *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*, Vol. 45, No:1, (2009), pp. 75-79.

¹¹ Richard Rorty, "The Priority of Democracy over Philosophy," in *The Rorty Reader*, ed. Christopher J. Voparil and Richard J. Bernstein (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), pp. 239-258.

of political liberalism and arrive at a conclusion about whether the two together can lead to a politically liberal approach to education.¹² In the following sections, I shall first provide a discussion about the idea of political liberalism and clarifying some central concepts of it. Second, I shall elaborate on how Dewey conceives of such concepts as democracy, pluralism, and person, which may provide a ground for analyzing the relevance of Dewey's thought to political liberalism. Finally, I shall conclude with a discussion on the possibility of whether the two thinkers can be reconciled within the limits of political liberalism.

2. RAWLS'S POLITICAL LIBERALISM

Rawls presented his theory of justice, namely justice as fairness, in *Theory*, which includes the principles of justice, as well as some central moral values and other philosophical matters.¹³ As Samuel Freeman stresses, although those elements of justice as fairness may be philosophically justifiable and true, they are not publicly justifiable to the members of a pluralistic democratic society.¹⁴ In fact, Rawls recognizes the issue in observing that his doctrine of justice has some internal problems arising mainly from the fact of reasonable pluralism, which is also related to what Rawls calls the burdens of judgment.¹⁵

According to Rawls, persons "share a common reason, similar powers of thought and judgment: they can draw inferences, weigh evidence, and balance competing considerations."¹⁶ But, the power of human reason may not necessarily lead each person to arrive at the same conclusion, especially on difficult ethical issues. However, for Rawls, such disagreements do not arise simply from the fact that persons are ignorant about those issues, or that they disagree merely because they are rivals. Rather, such disagreements are mainly rooted in the vagueness of beliefs, lack of evidence in many cases, and, in accordance with persons' own life experiences, disagreements about the importance of issues. Accordingly, the idea of the burdens of judgment suggests that persons can reasonably disagree about conceptions of the good. In other words, no single conception of the good life or a particular theory of justice based on a comprehensive doctrine is universally demanded by human reason so that every person must agree upon it. In short, disagreements that arise from the burdens of judgment and that are inevitable consequences of human reason serve as the primary source of diversity and pluralism.

¹² Since political liberalism is the focal point in this study, I refer to Rawls's *Political Liberalism* while discussing his ideas, unless otherwise cited.

¹³ I do not aim to provide a whole account of Rawls's theory of justice with its principles, which would exceed the limits of this study. The focus in this work is on the idea of political liberalism, its scope and differences from comprehensive doctrines.

¹⁴ Samuel Freeman, *Rawls* (New York: Routledge, 2007).

¹⁵ Rawls, *Political Liberalism*.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

The idea of the burdens of judgment leads Rawls to discuss the idea of reasonable pluralism, which is essentially different from simple pluralism. The latter can be described simply as pluralism that consists of persons who hold different views, beliefs, and values that define their conceptions of the good. But the former can be described as pluralism that consists of persons who not only hold different and even conflicting conceptions of the good but that also recognize the burdens of judgment and thus do not aim to compel others to accept a single conception of the good because the idea of the burdens of judgment leads them to conceive of differing comprehensive doctrines as incommensurable. In a reasonable pluralism, in this sense, persons aim to agree upon the principles of justice so that any reasonable comprehensive doctrine can be endorsed by reasonable persons in the society as freely as every other reasonable comprehensive doctrine.

This agreement signifies a political conception of justice. In a reasonable pluralism, principles of justice do not derive from a particular religious, moral, philosophical, or cultural comprehensive doctrine that “includes conceptions of what is of value in human life, as well as ideals of personal virtue and character.”¹⁷ Since persons inevitably hold different views, beliefs, and values as the idea of the burdens of judgment implies, Rawls argues that a comprehensive doctrine – whether it is religious or nonreligious – “can be maintained only by the oppressive use of state power,” which Rawls calls “the fact of oppression.”¹⁸ In other words, if a reasonable pluralism cannot be established, a comprehensive doctrine under the condition of plurality will eventually need to use oppressive state power in order to maintain its stability and authority over time, which will lead the doctrine in power to coerce persons to change or revise their conceptions of the good in accordance with what the doctrine in power values in human life. For this reason, Rawls argues that the just order of a pluralistic society is to be secured and sustained for *the right reasons*, because, as mentioned, reasonable pluralism resulting from the burdens of judgment signifies that no single conception of justice derived from a comprehensive doctrine can be justified to each citizen of a pluralistic democracy.

According to Rawls, a conception of justice can be justified to each citizen because each individual naturally has the two moral powers, a capacity for a conception of the good and a capacity for a sense of justice. While the former enables a person to develop, pursue, and, if justified, make revisions or abandon a conception of the good, the latter enables him/her to act from the principles of justice that are accepted as just in a reasonable way. The two powers, in fact, enable persons to participate in a reasonable pluralism. With the acknowledgement of the burdens of the judgment, persons recognize the need for a political conception of justice that secures not only a group’s or a person’s own but also others’ individual personalities based on a conception of the good that is derived from an incom-

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 175.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

measurable comprehensive doctrine. In other words, these two powers, under the reality of inevitable diversity, lead persons to agree upon a political conception of justice when the principles of justice provided by such a conception are justified on the grounds of securing equality and freedom of each member of a pluralistic society.

For Rawls, a just society is secured when an agreement is arrived at among the citizens of a pluralistic society who hold various incommensurable comprehensive doctrines that define their conceptions of the good. Rawls calls this agreement an overlapping consensus. The idea of an overlapping consensus, in fact, refers to a constitutional agreement among citizens. Under such a constitution, the principles of justice apply only to the democratic institutions that govern their everyday lives in the public domain. In other words, the principles of justice in such a constitutional pluralistic democracy neither specify what is of value in life nor derive from a comprehensive doctrine that affirms universal truths about how to live a life. Therefore, a political conception of justice is special in the sense that its principles apply only to the domain of the political and leave persons free to hold and pursue a conception of the good based on a reasonable comprehensive doctrine in their personal lives. In this way, in a reasonable pluralism, citizens can agree upon the principles of justice that secure the freedom and equality of each person in the society regardless of what kind of incommensurable doctrines they hold. However, to do so, principles of justice are to be agreed upon by the use of free public reason so that everyone knows that the principles are agreed by all, which also secures every one's equality in the construction of principles of justice. A political conception of justice agreed upon in this way guarantees that every citizen freely agrees on and complies with, and also knows that everyone else also agrees on and complies with the principles of justice. Eventually, in this way, not only a fair system of social cooperation among citizens is created but also the stability of a just order is secured.

It is important to emphasize that principles of justice are to be applied to the domain of the political only, not to the domain in which persons pursue their conceptions of the good, because acknowledging the burdens of judgment and the fact of reasonable pluralism limits a conception of justice to the domain of the political. In fact, reasonable pluralism along with the ideas discussed so far, according to Rawls, makes justice as fairness presented in his *Theory* unrealistic.¹⁹ For this reason, Rawls specifies the main problem of political liberalism by asking:

¹⁹ Accordingly, Rawls no longer believes that justice as fairness as presented in *Theory* is inherently stable and consistent. But, Rawls does not abandon the principles of justice presented in *Theory*. He provides a new way in which justice as fairness is justified from the perspective of political liberalism. He simply reformulates his theory in order to transform it into one political conception of justice that takes the fact of reasonable pluralism into account. However, I do not provide a discussion of the new version of justice as fairness, in order to remain within the limits of this study. For a detailed discussion of Rawls's so-called political turn and the essential differences between the

How is it possible that there may exist over time a stable and just society of free and equal citizens profoundly divided by reasonable though incompatible religious, philosophical, and moral doctrines? Put another way: How is it possible that deeply opposed though reasonable comprehensive doctrines may live together and all affirm the political conception of a constitutional regime?²⁰

He now conceives of the principles of justice developed first in *Theory* and advanced later in *Political Liberalism* as one of the reasonable doctrines of justice, but not the only one, that reliably responds to the needs of contemporary democracies that are inevitably pluralistic in nature. He revises his theory in *Political Liberalism* so that it is justified as a politically liberal rather than a comprehensive theory of justice. In a sense, justice as fairness aims at establishing a political conception of justice supported by public reason. It simply appears to be a practical device in achieving a just and stable order, in which a political conception of justice applies only to the basic political institutions. In this sense, as Rawls's so-called political turn signifies, various theories of justice can fulfill the requirements set by political liberalism. In addition, considering the fact that different societies may have different social and political arrangements based on their own histories and experiences, it is possible for different societies to agree upon different principles of justice while remaining within the limits of political liberalism. In other words, political liberalism allows different societies to have different political conceptions of justice that are agreed upon and justified through free public reason by all reasonable members of their particular societies.

So far, the main characteristics of the idea of political liberalism have been discussed. In accordance with what has been said, it can be argued that political liberalism argues for a just society that acknowledges reasonable pluralism based on the burdens of judgment, allows persons to hold various conceptions of the good that are viewed as valuable from citizens' own perspectives based on reasonable comprehensive doctrines, and enforces an overlapping consensus that specifies the principles of justice agreed upon by the members of society through free public reason. In this sense, it can be argued that political liberalism provides us with some central concepts that appear to be vital to evaluating whether a perspective is compatible with political liberalism. These appear to be the concepts of person/individual, pluralism, and (politically liberal) democracy. Now let us examine whether Dewey's ideas on those concepts demonstrate any reliable connections with political liberalism as framed by Rawls – or, at least, whether there is a representation of a valid ground – which may enable us to argue for the compatibility of the ideas of the two philosophers and to think further on the possibility of developing a Deweyan-Rawlsian educational account.

earlier and later versions of his theory, see, for example, Freeman, *Rawls*; Paul Weithman, *Why Political Liberalism? On John Rawls's Political Turn* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

²⁰ Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, p. xviii.

3. DEWEY ON PLURALISM, DEMOCRACY, AND THE PERSON

Dewey argues, in *Democracy and Education*, that “we cannot set up, out of our minds, something we regard as an ideal society.”²¹ He continues to argue that a good society is to be defined based on what actually exists so that it can be practicable. He stresses this notion in *The Public and Its Problems* by arguing that democracy “is an ideal in the only intelligible sense of an ideal,” which “in this sense is not a fact and never will be.”²² Accordingly, Dewey never conceived of democracy as a fixed ideal that leads a society to arrive at a final state. Democratic society, within this notion, is always in the process of making, revising, and thus evolving through time based on the needs of society and experiences of its citizens. For this reason, he mentions that a “society requires planning; that planning is the alternative to chaos, disorder, and insecurity.”²³ But he also emphasizes that planning is not toward a fixed ideal, in the case of the idea of democratic society. In other words, he defines the notion of planning consistently with his definition of a democratic society that is in the never-ending process of making. In view of that, he provides a sharp contrast between democratic society as planning and autocratic society as planned. In his words, “there is a difference between a society which is planned and society which is continuously planning – namely, the difference between autocracy and democracy.”²⁴ A continuously planning and evolving society based on what actually exists, therefore, would be conceived of as a democratic society. But, what would make such a society democratic, or what are the criteria to be fulfilled in order to become a democracy? Or, how would a society in the never-ending process of making be regarded as a genuine democracy?

Dewey argues that “a democracy is more than a form of government; it is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience.”²⁵ Accordingly, Dewey neither limits democracy to a set of political procedures nor provides a definition that can be justified for all times. Democracy can be realized when participation, interaction, and cooperation occur among the members of a society while they are trying to respond to the existing problems of their society. Democracy, then, is related to the concern over how interaction and cooperation among the members would occur.

In this sense, Dewey characterizes a democratically constituted society as having the two traits.²⁶ First, in such a society, there are numerous and varied views held

²¹ Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, p. 65.

²² John Dewey, *The Public and Its Problems* (Chicago: Swallow Press, 1954/1927), p. 148.

²³ John Dewey and John L. Childs, “The Social-Economic Situation and Education,” in William H. Kilpatrick, ed., *The Educational Frontier* (New York: Century Company, 1933), p. 72.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 72.

²⁵ Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, p. 68.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

by different social groups, as well as the recognition of mutual interests among them.

Second, there must be free interactions among social groups and a shared aim to resolve issues that result from the interactions among them. The criteria laid down by Dewey, similar to Rawls's ideas of the burdens of judgment and reasonable pluralism, suggest that there is no single view that all the groups can affirm in a democratic society consisting of different groups. But members of groups are to continue interacting with others from different groups, even though it may lead them to disagree and create problems. Yet, members of different groups acknowledge that disagreements are natural and can be overcome if all share a common sense that a mutual interest is always available for those who aim to maintain social cooperation, as in Rawls's reasonable pluralism in which persons are willing to agree upon an overlapping consensus that secures a fair system of social cooperation.

Within this perspective, Dewey does not argue that there should be no conflicting interests in a democratic society. Rather, he views social problems as the essential tools for a society's progress toward becoming a more mature democracy. Otherwise, a society would operate under a fixed ideal and become planned instead of planning, which indeed would not be considered as a democracy at all in Dewey's view. Therefore, the main concern regarding social conflicts is about how to resolve them, rather than whether there should be any conflicts in a society. Dewey, underlines this idea by stating that:

Of course there *are* conflicting interests; otherwise there would be no social problems. The problem under discussion is precisely *how* conflicting claims are to be settled in the interest of the widest possible contribution to the interests of all.²⁷

Now, if democracy is a mode of associated living, if a society may consist of different groups, if there are inevitable conflicts among those groups but social cooperation should nevertheless be maintained, and if the way of resolving social conflicts is to agree upon the widest possible contribution to the interest of all, which altogether define a genuine democracy in a Deweyan sense, then how can a pluralistic democratic society survive or what can secure its stability over time in terms of being just and democratic? To answer this question, it is crucial to examine how Dewey conceives of pluralism and the rights of groups and individuals in a democratic society and how he argues for such a society's stability, as well as how he describes the way in which different groups and individual persons in a pluralistic society interact.

²⁷ John Dewey, "Renascent Liberalism," in Jo A. Boydston, ed., *John Dewey: The Later Works, 1925-1953, Vol. 11* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern University Press, 1987/1935), p. 56, emphasis original.

Dewey views the rights of different groups in a larger political unit as one of the greatest problems of his time.²⁸ His solution to the problem of plurality, with a main concern over ensuring a stable and just social unity, can be found in his *The Principles of Nationality*, which argues that:

One principle seems to be clear – namely, that if there is to be lasting peace there must be a recognition of the cultural rights and privileges of each nationality, its rights to its own language, its own literature, its own ideals, its moral and spiritual outlook on the world, its complete religious freedom, and such political autonomy as may be consistent with the maintenance of general social unity.²⁹

While emphasizing the distinctive constitution of different groups in a pluralistic society, Dewey also discusses how those groups and the people within them are to cooperate and what are the limits on a group freedom to develop its own individuality.

As in the case of conflicts among people, variety is an inevitable outcome of human nature. Regarding variety or diversity, Dewey, like Rawls, argues that it is impossible to expect everyone to speak the same language or have the same thoughts, or even have “the same beliefs, the same historical traditions, and the same ideals and aspirations for the future,” which leads him to believe that “variety *is* the spice of life, and the richness and the attractiveness of social institutions depend upon cultural diversity among separate units.”³⁰ Therefore, groups consisting of individuals who hold similar views about life – but hold different views from the members of other groups – are essential components of a democratic society.

In fact, the reason that Dewey develops such a view is closely related to what actually existed in the society of his time. Dewey underlines that:

the American nation is itself complex and compound. Strictly speaking, it is inter-racial and inter-national in its make-up. It is composed of a multitude of peoples speaking different tongues, inheriting diverse traditions, cherishing varying ideals of life. This fact is basic to our nationalism.³¹

These facts lead him to think about how to establish a genuine unity among those different components of the society. Dewey further argues that:

²⁸ John Dewey, “America and the world,” in Joseph Ratner, ed., *Characters and Events: Popular Essays in Social and Political Philosophy* (New York: H. Holt and Company, 1929), pp. 642-644.

²⁹ John Dewey, “The Principles of Nationality,” in Jo A. Boydston, ed., *The Middle Works, 1899-1924, Vol. 10* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1980/1917), p. 288.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 288, emphasis original.

³¹ John Dewey, “Nationalizing Education,” in *National Education Association of the United States Addresses and Proceedings of the Fifty-Fourth Annual Meeting, LIV* (Ann Arbor: National Education Association, 1916), p. 184.

Our unity cannot be a homogenous thing ... it must be a unity created by drawing out and composing into a harmonious whole the best, the most characteristic, which each contributing race and people has to offer.³²

Therefore, not only must there be diversity in a democratic society in terms of persons holding various views of life, but also, as the two criteria he provided indicate, there must be free interactions among them and a common aim to seek agreements upon the issues that result from their interactions, which must lead them to contribute to constructing a conception of social cooperation, a basis for unity among them. In other words, each group is to acknowledge that they both are free to hold their own distinctive views and must participate in establishing a democratic society that secures everyone's interests, as in Rawls's fair system of social cooperation.

In addition, Dewey provides an insight into how a group can pursue its own way of life while being a member of a democratic society that consists of various ways of life different from its own. Dewey believes that each group must have an opportunity to cultivate its own distinctive individuality, but, in his words, "to the point where it does not become dangerous to the welfare of other peoples or groups."³³ In this sense, a group can be considered as legitimate insofar as it respects others' rights to have their own views of life, continues to interact with the others, and contributes to cooperation among the members of society, while holding a distinctive view of life. Therefore, Dewey provides a democratic solution to one of the most important problems of his time, a solution that genuinely contributes to the development of democratic practices and to discussions about democratic theory. Dewey later emphasizes, regarding the problem of plurality, that:

We have solved the problem by a complete separation of nationality from citizenship. Not only have we separated the church from the state, but we have separated language, cultural traditions, all that is called race, from the state - that is from problems of political organization and power.³⁴

Clearly, Dewey argues for separating the issues related to the ways of life that are valued by groups and individual persons based on different doctrines from the issues that are related only to political reality. Rawls, as discussed, also argues for the ideas of reasonable pluralism and political conception of justice with similar concerns in mind.

So far, in this section, Dewey's notions of democratic society and pluralism have been discussed. It is clear that Dewey argues for the idea of pluralistic democracy and recognizes the participation and equality of all groups as long as they remain within the limits that secure the welfare of all. In addition, and equally im-

³² Ibid., p. 185.

³³ Dewey, "The Principles," p. 289.

³⁴ Dewey, "America and the World," p. 643.

portant, Dewey, like Rawls, distinguishes the domain of the political from the domains of the cultural and the personal. But, how does he conceptualize a person in his philosophy? Are there any unique characteristics in his portrayal of the democratic person?³⁵

As the above discussion indicates, each person can be a member of a group holding different views of life as valuable from their own perspectives. But, according to Dewey, an individual is not to isolate him/herself, because an individual is a full member of a society only if he/she interacts with others. In other words, members of a democratic society are to remember that they act in a common world and are to regulate their acts based on public interests rather than based on egoistic or group interests.³⁶ Dewey's such view of democracy, in fact, is transactional relational in nature since persons in a pluralistic and relational society continually contribute to social and intellectual development of one another.³⁷ Accordingly, Dewey argues that when groups "manifest a fullness, variety and freedom of possession and enjoyment of meanings and goods,"³⁸ they become alive, flexible, and stable. In other words, when groups promote individual diversity, allow their members to interact with others from different groups as members of the larger society, and become open to interactions between groups - meaning that they are distinctive but not isolated - then the larger society becomes a more stable democracy. In other words, as long as a person interacts with others within the limits that describe democracy from the perspective provided by Dewey as mentioned above, they experience how to be a citizen of a pluralistic democracy. In this sense, developing democratic citizens appears to be crucial for a stable democratic society. Like Rawls's reasonable persons required for a pluralistic just democracy, for Dewey, a genuinely democratic society needs individuals who value both their own and others' liberties and who are democratic in both thought and action. For this reason, Dewey warns that merely establishing democratic institutions, for example, does not guarantee the development of democratic citizens.³⁹

³⁵ Doubtless, Dewey's notion of the person cannot be fully discussed without elaborating on his ideas about the education of the members of a democratic society. Beginning from his early career, Dewey argued that rather than the enactment of law or any other technical change, the fundamental method of social progress and reform is education. See John Dewey, "My Pedagogical Creed," *School Journal*, LIV, (1897), pp. 77-80. In a similar vein, his discussions about the concepts of democratic society and democratic individuals are based upon his account of education. However, without delving into his discussions about the education of individuals, I try to give a general framework of the person as provided by Dewey in his discussions of the central concepts of this study, for the same reason stated previously.

³⁶ Dewey, *Democracy and Education*.

³⁷ Barbara Thayer-Bacon, "Beyond Liberal Democracy: Dewey's Renascent Liberalism," *Education and Culture*, Vol. 22, No: 2, (2006), pp. 19-30.

³⁸ Dewey, *The Public*, p. 216.

³⁹ John Dewey, "What I Believe," *Forum*, LXXXIII, (1930), pp. 176-182.

Of course, to become democratic in both thought and action, a pluralistic society is to provide its members with certain essential rights. A society, for Dewey, is “undesirable” if it “sets up barriers to free intercourse and communication of experience”⁴⁰ that result from interactions between different groups, because Dewey conceives of race, class, and the like as barriers if they prevent individuals from experiencing free and full communication. In his criticism of Plato, Dewey argues that each person is to be seen as a unique individual, and the diversity of tendencies among them is to be recognized.⁴¹ Subordination of individuality to some specific classification, in Dewey’s view, cannot ensure the stability of a society. A stable democratic society, therefore, is to promote individual differences among the members of the society. Or, in Rawlsian terms, a democratic society is to promote individuals’ moral powers, their capacities for a conception of the good.

For this reason, Dewey argues that persons are to encounter people from different backgrounds, including different social classes, races, jobs, cultures, and ethnic groups and to engage in democratic communications and interactions with them. In this way, individuals become aware of what is available for them to judge and choose among as they develop their own individualities. According to Dewey, to learn to be human is related to the development of one’s sense of being an individually distinctive member of a society.⁴²

But individual diversity or an individual’s uniqueness comes not only from the individual’s interactions between others, but also from his/her own reflections on his/her experiences. In this sense, Dewey argues that “the democratic idea of freedom is not the right of each individual to *do* as he pleases ... the basic freedom is that of freedom of *mind* and of whatever degree of freedom of action and experience is necessary to produce freedom of intelligence.”⁴³ In other words, individuals are to be free in not only being a member of a group, but also in developing and pursuing their own conceptions of a valuable life as they experience differences in their society through interacting with others who have differing conceptions of value. Accordingly, since individuals are to aim to resolve issues that result from interaction among them in a continuously planning democratic society, a person has an equal right to offer his/her contribution to the progress and stability of the society while considering the welfare of the all. But in doing all of these, as the above discussion indicates, individuals need to distinguish between the issues that are related to the domain of the political and issues that are related to the domains of the personal and the cultural.

⁴⁰ Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, p. 76.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² Dewey, *The Public*.

⁴³ John Dewey, “Democracy and Educational Administration,” in Jo A. Boydston, ed., *John Dewey: The Later Works, 1925-1953, Vol. 11* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern University Press, 1987/1937), p. 220, emphasis original.

In short, democratic individuals are required for a stable democratic society that is pluralistic in nature. In a democratic society, the purpose of all political and social institutions, in this sense, “is to set free and to develop the capacities of human individuals without respect to race, sex, class or economic status.”⁴⁴ By democratic individuals, moreover, Dewey refers to persons who rely upon their intelligence based on their own experiences, who are free not only to be a member of a group but also to be a unique individual with his/her view of life, and who acknowledge not only their rights but also other persons’ rights to participate in the progress of their society to become more stable and democratic. Therefore, the conception of a democratic person in Dewey’s view can be characterized as a free, equal, and intelligent being, like Rawls’s conception of a reasonable person. A stable democratic pluralistic society essentially relies upon such a concept of the person, as Dewey stresses:

Liberty to think, inquire, discuss, is central in the whole group of rights which are secured in theory to individuals in a democratic social organization. It is essential because the essence of the democratic principle is appeal to voluntary disposition instead of to force, to persuasion instead of coercion.⁴⁵

4. CONCLUDING REMARKS

In light of the above discussion, a general conclusion on the main question of this study may be drawn. In accordance with their own philosophical orientations, both Dewey and Rawls provide unique perspectives on the concepts elaborated in this study. However, a close look at the two philosophers’ discussions about the concepts of democracy, pluralism, and the person may lead to a promising conclusion, bearing the idea of political liberalism in mind.

Considering the idea of a politically liberal society as framed by Rawls and the idea of democracy provided by Dewey, the following points signify a general perspective shared by the two. Both philosophers differentiate genuine democracy from merely procedural democracy. For Rawls, a constitutional democracy under an overlapping consensus focuses on basic rights and liberties within the limits of a political conception of justice, rather than the basic procedures of democratic government, such as electoral and legislative procedures. For Dewey, too, democracy is more than specific procedures of democratic government. Rather, he emphasizes the cooperative and communicative aspects of a democratically governed society, which leads citizens to consider existing problems and aim to arrive at the most satisfactory resolutions that ensure the welfare of each participant. In addi-

⁴⁴ John Dewey, *Reconstruction in Philosophy* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1948), p. 186.

⁴⁵ John Dewey, “Morals and the Political Order,” in Jo A. Boydston, ed., *John Dewey: The Later Works, 1925-1953, Vol. 7* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern University Press, 1985/1932), p. 358.

tion, both conceive of a democratic society as subject to continuous reconstruction, rather than as a fixed or finalized structure based on specific democratic procedures. In this regard, Rawls's idea not only stresses free public reason but also emphasizes that different societies may have different political conceptions of justice arrived at in accordance with their own histories and experiences. Dewey stresses the idea very strongly that a genuine democratic society is in the never-ending process of making. Moreover, perhaps most importantly, both Rawls and Dewey distinguish the domains of the political and the cultural from the domain of the personal in order to provide an idea of a stable democratic society.

Speaking of the stability and the domain of the political, the above discussion highlights that the plurality or variety of different views is essential for a stable democracy from both philosophers' perspectives. For Rawls, disagreements inevitably derive from the power and limits of human reason, what Rawls calls the burdens of judgment. Similarly, for Dewey, variety among individuals is inevitable and thus it inevitably leads them to disagreements that may create social issues. However, what makes such a pluralistic society a reasonable pluralism in Rawls's terms or a real democracy in Dewey's definition is the idea that all components of a pluralistic society are to recognize such inevitable diversity and aim to arrive at agreements through the participation of all while respecting others' personhood and rights. In this regard, Rawls argues that if a pluralistic society aims to operate in accordance with a single doctrine, then the society eventually becomes oppressive rather than democratic. Dewey's ideas signify in a similar vein that in a pluralistic society no one group or person is to isolate itself but is to participate in resolving social issues, and everyone is to acknowledge that no single group or doctrine should become dangerous to any other group or doctrine, meaning that a pluralistic society is to be governed not by a single group or doctrine but by a sense of cooperative participation in a continuously planning society that otherwise would become autocratic rather than democratic.

Within such an inevitably pluralistic structure, moreover, the concept of the person appears to be crucial for both philosophers' definition of a democratic society. Dewey argues for the recognition of persons' individual uniqueness, because he believes that diversity among individuals is an inevitable result of human nature and experience, which appears to be similar to what Rawls argues for the plurality of the conceptions of the good affirmed by individuals as a result of the burdens of judgment. The stability of a democratic society, in this regard, appears to be highly dependent upon the acknowledgment of the inevitable diversity of views on a worthwhile life, because such a democracy is sustainable only when persons recognize the need for respecting everyone's freedom and equality in such a pluralistic society. For this reason, persons, according to the both thinkers, are to interact with others holding different views and even conflicting views from their own. In this sense, both Rawls and Dewey argue that persons are to be free in develop-

ing and pursuing their own views of life. Neither the groups to which persons belong nor the political structure of the society should restrict their freedom in this regard. A person who relies upon his/her own intelligence and who develops a unique but not isolated individual personality is what a genuine democratic pluralistic society needs from the perspective of Dewey. Similarly, for Rawls a person who conceives of him/herself as a self-authenticated source of valid claims with the two moral powers, namely the capacity for a conception of the good and a sense of justice, is the essential foundation of a stable pluralistic and just democratic society.

In conclusion, given the similar perspectives of both philosophers on the concepts of democracy, pluralism, and the person, it is plausible to argue that Rawls and Dewey can be reconciled within the limits of political liberalism. Of course, one cannot expect from the two to use exactly the same terms or to seek to justify the same philosophical perspective using the same arguments. But the above discussion signifies the possibility of reconsidering the two philosophers together in our attempts to respond to some existing problems. In this regard, by considering the idea of a democratic society in the never-ending process of making and planning, Dewey would allow us to reconsider what actually exists in terms of societal and political problems that result from the contemporary realities and what is available for us to respond to those problems. In fact, it would certainly contradict with the two thinkers' ideas if one maintains that the two would stand for a single and fixed perspective on the essential characteristics of democracy. In this sense, it appears to be reasonable to reconsider the ideas of Dewey and Rawls together on some contemporary philosophical matters, including educational, social, and political issues.

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S y m p o s i u m I

Carmine Di Martino, *Viventi umani e non umani. Tecnica, linguaggio, memoria*