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# *The Fact of Sacrifice and Necessity of Faith: Dewey and the Ethics of Democracy*

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## ***Abstract***<sup>1</sup>

John Dewey's underappreciated 1888 essay, "The Ethics of Democracy," attempts to answer the following question: How do I consider myself a member of "the people" that rule in a democracy, and yet belong to the political minority? In challenging the prevailing view of this essay, I argue that Dewey defends a fundamental indeterminacy in the idea of "the people" that implies a necessary, but productive tension between relative stability and emerging disruptions. The latter, he argues, holds out hope that the power of "the people" can be redirected, thus redeeming the sacrifices of the minority and retaining their identification with "the people." For Dewey, the idea of "the people" means that, though democracy entails sacrifice, the legitimacy of the political system demands faith that it will be redeemed. Although this view is first captured in 1888, it receives amplification in his later writings.

*Keywords: Dewey, Democracy, Sacrifice, Minority, Maine, The People, King, Stanton, Race, Gender, Redemption, Race.*

"Faith makes us, and not we it, and faith makes its own forms."

—Ralph Waldo Emerson, "The Divinity School Address," 1838

## ***Introduction***

Published in 1888, "The Ethics of Democracy" is John Dewey's first and most underappreciated attempt to address a problem inherent to democracy.<sup>2</sup> How do I consider myself a member of "the people" that rule, and yet belong to the political minority? By minority I do not simply mean as determined by an electoral process, but also

those minorities that are identified as such because of inequity in political power and access. The question is therefore of critical importance not only in the American context, but for much of the history of modern democratic thinking. Either the answer implies the use of coercive force by majoritarianism that empties democracy of much that is thought morally appealing—namely, that all who are affected by collective decisions should have a hand in their construction.<sup>3</sup> Or, majoritarianism implies more—a way of both recognizing and potentially rectifying the political status of minorities without using force, mitigating the practical and psychic effects their status represents, and retaining the unity the idea of “the people” implies. It is this second answer, I argue, that emerges in Dewey’s early and later writings, beginning with this 1888 essay.

Since its modern incarnation, the idea of “the people” has been used to dissolve the political line of demarcation between the rulers and the ruled that previously defined monarchical and aristocratic regimes.<sup>4</sup> For if the rulers and the ruled share a political identity—that is, they are members of one and the same citizenry equal before the law—the power held by the former is merely fiduciary in quality and this means that the latter is never alienated once and for all time from the source of authority that rules over them. Modern representative government denotes a determinant political community of rights holders that can establish or dissolve forms of government and redirect delegated power.

The idea of “the people” is also, and perhaps more importantly, an aspirational category—a *community not yet in existence*—that both informs and conceals the political life-world of democracy and extends beyond electoral politics. On the one hand, it inspires political struggle and is a response to societal deficiencies. On the other, the idea of “the people” conceals the political sacrifices that individuals and groups often make in their efforts to transform democracy.<sup>5</sup> By “sacrifice” I mean a loss that refers to the denial of one’s moral and political standing amid petitions for formal inclusion. The quest to transform the political landscape indicates that the legitimacy of democracy demands faith that sacrifice will be redeemed. Here the word “redeem” indicates the possibility of mending wounds at the heart of the community, the end result of which is to include those who have otherwise been excluded from political life. To take one example, Martin Luther King Jr.’s belief that the “suffering” of sacrifice “is redemptive” does not merely refer to a Christian ethic but also to a democratic one.<sup>6</sup> He shares a view of faith which, as William James describes in 1882, involves the “readiness to act in a cause the prosperous issue of which is not certified in advance.”<sup>7</sup> The faith that sustains the aspirational idea of the people follows from one and the same source: uncertainty. Citizens simply do not know if or when sacrifice will be redeemed.

Addressing the question of how one belongs to “the people” from which one is excluded, while connecting that answer to sacrifice, the possibility of redemption, and faith, and further locating this problem in Dewey hinges on how we understand the idea of “the people.” Who are the members of the elusive “We” that figure prominently in the American Declaration of Independence, frame the American Constitution, and precede the words, “the people”? At the theoretical level, the answer often defies agreement. As legal historian and jurist Sir Henry Maine explains in his *Popular Government* of 1885—the book that motivated Dewey’s essay: “Vox Populi [Voice of the People] may be Vox Dei [Voice of God], but . . . there never has been any agreement as to what Vox means or as to what Populus means.”<sup>8</sup>

In this essay I argue that Dewey responds to Maine by accepting the lack of agreement inherent in defining what the voice of the people means, but with an important caveat. If there is no agreement on what the voice of the people means, Dewey maintains that this is precisely the point. For him, democracy contains a fundamental indeterminacy in the idea of “the people” that implies a necessary but productive tension between its definiteness and its indefiniteness. Indeterminacy captures “the people” in the form of an “institutionally defined flesh and blood majority,”<sup>9</sup> even as it refers to power that is never wholly identified with any given majority. This is the often cited idea in Dewey that the meaning of democracy is never to be identified with constitutional or institutional structures, as well as his later claim that democracy is a task before us. As such, indeterminacy enables faith—it becomes the background from which one proceeds in attempting to transform the community—and simultaneously ties political actors to the uncertainty implied by democratic politics. What Maine describes as a problem—namely, that there has never been agreement as to what “the people” means—Dewey understands to be the source of democracy’s transformative quality. Indeed, it is precisely “the people” as an indeterminate category in which aspirations (or “ideals” in Dewey’s language) are invested that renders intelligible the stance of someone like King.

Yet Dewey scholars, and here I’m thinking of Alfonso Damico, Alan Ryan, and Axel Honneth, diminish the importance of this essay, turning instead to his much later and more popular work of 1927, *The Public and Its Problems*. The problem that they discern in this essay is largely the organic metaphor that Dewey uses to elucidate the integrity of democracy—the view of political society as an organism. Such imagery, owing largely to Dewey’s idealism,<sup>10</sup> seemingly glosses over precisely what needs to be addressed—namely, the problem of difference that follows from the fact of sacrifice and which threatens the idea of “the people” that is otherwise so central to democracy. As they argue, Dewey moves too quickly from the individual will to the will of all—a problem, they argue, he comes to address in his later works.<sup>11</sup>

While there is something to this worry and therefore good reason to turn to *The Public and Its Problems*, as I shall also do below, the exclusive focus on this apparent deficiency obscures those moments in the essay where Dewey breaks with the social organism imagery, gesturing to a position he later comes to elucidate and defend. In other words, already in “The Ethics of Democracy” Dewey moves to address the problem by focusing on the way in which the idea of majoritarianism, for it to be deemed legitimate, is expressive of this tension between determinacy and indeterminacy. In his later writings Dewey embraces a more complicated social theory that underscores conflict, and this allows for greater amplification of this productive tension in democracy. “The Ethics of Democracy” thus represents an *initial* site for understanding Dewey’s response to this all important question regarding the meaning of “the people,” and allows us to discern in his work what I describe as the *characterological* demand of democracy—the willingness to confront the fact of sacrifice with the necessity of faith. While his later works are relevant in this context, I turn to them to amplify and extend, rather than supplant what is present in his essay of 1888.

By turning back to Maine’s *Popular Government* and Dewey’s response, I argue, “The Ethics of Democracy” can be read as moving between two different levels of analysis—the decision making procedure of majoritarianism and its ethical underbelly. The latter—ethical dimension—refers to the impermanence of those who form the majority. In fact, it is this latter view, I shall maintain, that informs his later thinking and extends beyond electoral politics. For Dewey, impermanence holds out the possibility that one’s status as a political minority will not be reified. Furthermore, moving between the two levels of analysis allows Dewey to address the problem of conflict he is so often accused of ignoring.

To make good on my argument, the essay unfolds in three sections. In the first section, I briefly revisit Maine’s arguments and Dewey’s rejoinder. The aim here is to underscore Dewey’s response, but also to explain why the essay has nonetheless appeared so problematic. In the next two sections, I argue for a re-characterization of the 1888 essay and its continuity with Dewey’s later writings that emphasizes the ethical undercurrent upon which majoritarianism specifically, and democracy more generally, is based. Focusing here, I maintain, allows us to see the indeterminacy of “the people” to which his understanding of democracy is committed, and the importance of sacrifice, redemption, and faith therein. In defending this position, I shall return to the example of King to deepen the meaning of Dewey’s claims.<sup>12</sup>

One final word is in order before we begin. I freely acknowledge that Dewey does not use the language of sacrifice and redemption to capture the essay’s upshot. And I concede that the term faith, as a philosophically rich concept, enters his thinking much later. Some readers will

thus look askance at this interpretive move. Am I not saddling Dewey with descriptions he could not be expected to hold? And yet, my claim is that these terms and their meanings help to better focus his response to Maine, allowing us to think about the essay and its connection to Dewey's later writings in a different register. The criteria of assessment therefore should not be whether we find these precise terms employed by Dewey, but whether once deployed they nonetheless help illuminate his understanding of democracy as he conceived it. I am suggesting that if we use the latter criteria, we will find the terms more useful than we might otherwise think.

### *The Problem of Democracy*

#### *Maine and the Problem of Democracy*

Sir Henry Maine's challenge to democracy is part of a much larger set of criticisms during the Victorian period—attacks that either condemn democracy wholesale or reduce it merely to a form of government unable to realize the sovereignty of the people.<sup>13</sup> Maine directs his criticism to a view of democracy he attributes to Rousseau. This position, he maintains, views the people as participating in the formation of every policy. In this view, Maine argues, all citizens feel themselves to be at *one* with decision making (hence the idea of the unity of “the people”) because they do not see those decisions at odds with their deeply felt interests (PG, essays II–III). This, Maine explains, is at the core of what we typically mean when we call the people sovereign.

Maine rejects this view, arguing instead that it is a mere fiction. Rather than being derived from the true will of the people, he argues, political consensus is formed as a result of corruption and manipulation: “I cannot but agree . . . it is absurd to suppose that, if the hard-toiled, and the needy, the artisan and the agricultural labourer, become the depositaries of power, and if they can find agents through whom it becomes possible for them to exercise it, they will not employ it for what they may be led to believe are their own interests” (PG, p. 65). Maine's point is simple: it is impossible to form a general will out of a multitude of conflicting interests, and what appears to be the general will is in fact the will of a few exercised over and against those without political power (PG, p. 105).

We might quickly dismiss Maine as a disgruntled conservative. After all, he attributes to aristocracy “the progress of mankind” (PG, p. 63; cf. p. 190). Yet, his criticism alerts us to the *remainders* of political life that Rousseau otherwise believes democracy transcends. Maine's claim is that for any given majority there remains an unabsorbed minority that signifies difference and belies the so-called unity of “the people.” For Rousseau, in contrast, the emblem of democratic life is substantive homogeneity. This explains his suspicion of public deliberation.<sup>14</sup> With

homogeneity as a goal, it becomes difficult, if not impossible, to think of democratic action as involving remainders. But nor, as Maine well knows, can this account make sense of the conflicts that are inescapably central to every society. So the issue is not whether political conflict will exist, but how it will be handled. Unfortunately, since Maine takes the transcendence of loss as the *sine qua non* of democracy and so the target of his criticism, to reveal democracy's inability to achieve its goal is *ipso facto* to highlight its emptiness. Is it possible, then, to reconcile sacrifice with the unity of "the people"? How can sacrifice affirm rather than threaten the legitimacy of democracy? It is these questions that we must begin to address.

*"The Ethics of Democracy" and Its Problems: Dewey's Rejoinder*

In "The Ethics of Democracy" Dewey seeks to address this indictment and so prefigures a number of themes he revisited throughout his career. Treatment of this essay is often quick and critical, largely because interpreters focus on the idealist metaphysics in which it is seemingly located. As Axel Honneth explains: "Intersubjectivity within whose framework social life has always unfolded is presented according to the model of a 'social organism' in which each individual contributes to the reproduction of the whole through her own activity."<sup>15</sup> Alan Ryan states the point more sharply: "But even Hegel's emphasis on conflict . . . faced by the modern world was at odds with Dewey's blithe optimism about the ability of the modern social organism to resolve its problems."<sup>16</sup> Dewey fails, they argue, to address the problem which Maine poses: If "the people" make a sound, "is it a sound in which the note struck by minorities is entirely silent" (PG, p. 187)?

This is a real worry; but the point is that these critical assessments have concluded too quickly against Dewey, and as a result have obfuscated the complexity of his response that connects "The Ethics of Democracy" to his later writings. His answer, I argue, involves elucidating a view of majoritarianism that presupposes the redemption of sacrifice as a function of democratic life. The presupposition emerges from seeing "the people" as indeterminate—the feature of Dewey's argument that he emphasizes more forcefully in works such as *The Public and Its Problems*, but which is latent in the earlier essay. Since citizens can neither know when or if sacrifice will be redeemed, their commitment to democratic life necessarily demands faith. In this regard, sacrifice and faith reveal both the sovereign capacity of "the people" even as it implies the inescapable non-sovereignty of democratic action. It is this response by Dewey that answers the question how one can both belong to "the people," and yet form a member of the minority. If we are to generate confidence that more is at work in "The Ethics of Democracy," we need a better sense of how the essay itself can appear so problematic.

Dewey addresses Maine by identifying his account of democracy with a narrow and faulty premise regarding the relationship between humans and society.

What makes it more surprising that Maine should adopt the numerical aggregation, the multitude conception, is the fact that in times past he has dealt such vigorous blows against a theory which is the natural and inevitable outcome of this conception. The "Social Contract" theory of states has never been more strongly attacked than by Maine, and yet the sole source of this theory is just such a conception of society, as a mass of units, as the one Maine here adopts. . . . It is the idea that men are mere individuals, without any social relations until they form a contract. The method by which they get out of their individualistic conditions is not the important matter; rather this is the fact, that they are in an individualistic condition out of which they have to be got. . . . Maine rejects this artifice as unreal, but keeps the fundamental idea, the idea of men as a mere mass, which led to it. [EW 1, p. 231]

For Dewey, the initial problem with Maine's view is that he begins with the assumption of humans as solitary units. Society correspondingly appears not as a unified whole with differentiated parts, but rather as a mass of unconnected elements. This is precisely why Maine rejects the idea that we can identify political decisions with something called "the people."

But Maine also rejects, in several places of his text, this explanation of human society as based on *a priori* speculation (PG, pp. 160–61). Despite this, Dewey contends, Maine nonetheless rests his own view of democracy on the sociological presuppositions of the social contract theory. As such, Maine misrepresents the relationship between the individual and society. "Men are not isolated non-social atoms," Dewey explains, "but are men only when in intrinsic relations to men" (EW 1, p. 231). For him, there is a naturalness to our interpersonal associations that is missed by the atomistic conception of society. In fact, a theory which takes humans as situated beings whose identities take shape in society "has wholly superseded the theory of men as an aggregate, as a heap of grains of sand needing some factitious mortar to put them into semblance of order" (EW 1, p. 231). We are thus socially constituted beings, the result of which provides the resources out of which we form interests that cohere with the whole and interests that diverge from the community to which we belong.

Understanding the basis of democracy in this way allows Dewey to shift the discussion away from defending the very idea of democracy to elucidating how best to understand it. This shift is important, since it is precisely the fiction of homogeneity that Maine believes is constitutive of democracy, rather than the alternative view of difference in unity

that I argue Dewey is trying to elucidate. But this transition is not merely arbitrary or semantic; Dewey is uniquely aware of the need to elucidate democracy such that it can withstand the pluralism that has always formed part and parcel of America.

Yet, as critics well know, the essay seemingly struggles with achieving its goals. Dewey's reference to "factitious mortar" quoted earlier is significant in this regard. If political society is not held together by a false will imposed externally for the sake of order, it must, he concludes, imply unity that makes the idea of "the people" intelligible to the citizenry. For this reason, Dewey goes on in the essay to adopt a view of society as "a social organism" in which the function of the various parts, like the human body, is conducive to overall harmony (EW 1, p. 232). The metaphor comes from the heavy influence on Dewey of British idealists such as T. H. Green and F. H. Bradley.<sup>17</sup>

Readers of Dewey should be careful at precisely this juncture. Dewey concedes that society is not possessed of "one interest or will"; he acknowledges, for example, that there are a diversity of interests, "struggle[s] and opposition[s] and hostilit[ies]," already sounding quite different from someone like Rousseau (EW 1, p. 232). There are, he says, "classes within society, circles within the classes and cliques within the circles" (EW 1, p. 233). Yet Dewey insists, critics argue, that representation of those interests through one's vote are not the result of individuals' private reflections independent of the whole, but are themselves fragments of the whole.

These previous remarks partly confront any reader of this essay with an important difficulty not simply in Dewey's philosophy, but in democracy more generally. The concern that Ryan and Honneth are drawing our attention to is that Dewey does not seem to recognize that conflict among competing claims will often implicate a political community in decisions where sacrifice is inevitable. In fact, according to Dewey, conflict appears to lead necessarily to unity. After all, to liken the body politic to a human organism means that different parts function to the benefit of the whole. When we think of parts of our bodies not functioning properly, we typically see those parts as sick or abnormal. But it is not at all clear that a citizen's attempt to cultivate their personality or realize some specific vision of this or that public policy will be amenable to the body politic. And yet, it is often inappropriate to label that citizen as sick or abnormal. It may simply be the case that the citizen's way of seeing things is just as legitimate, if not more so, even if it cannot be reconciled with the current drift of the community.

The problem here is that while he acknowledges the fact of conflict, Dewey does not seem to properly emphasize the *mechanism* that can potentially absorb it or make the persistence of conflict consonant with a political system in which "the people" can be said to rule. The social

organism metaphor is flawed, even as Dewey uses it to show the kind of political integrity democracy's image of "the people" entails. The metaphor obscures, it seems, what it should illuminate.

If politics involves real winners and losers, important questions emerge for Dewey's view of democracy at this early stage: How do I lose in a way that makes me feel part of "the people" that have won? How can the sacrifice of the minority legitimize democratic action without simultaneously breeding resentment that may destabilize democracy? How do we retain the idea of "the people" that the social organism metaphor implies, while addressing the remainders of disappointment that come with political life?

Although Dewey's response seems to fit well with what critics claim, we can better explain his emphasis on unity that on the one hand acknowledges conflict and on the other retains the legitimacy of democracy if we pay more attention to his description of majoritarianism and its ethical undercurrent. The next section, then, will involve us in revisiting the complexity of the essay and the way the themes there are amplified in Dewey's later writings. I will therefore keep in view the essay of 1888, turning at crucial moments to accentuate, through later texts, what is latent in the earlier text.

*The Fact of Sacrifice: Re-Reading "The Ethics of Democracy"*

The questions above regarding the relationship between "the people" and the status of the minority are not new in the 1880s; they are at the core of the formation of modern democracy. Its emergence involves the establishment of popular authority through representatives; modern democracy seeks to emphasize, both in theory and practice, the fact that such representatives are simultaneously those that are ruled. The moment a line of difference is drawn between those who rule and those who are ruled, the idea of "the people" becomes not merely an ideal to approximate, but an illusion. In such a context, the minority will always stand outside the institutions of power, and the majority will seem no different in substance from a despot, who rules over his or her subjects with arbitrary sway. But the view of representative government carries within itself an important claim about the connection between individuals and their relationship to political authority. On this, Dewey says: "Wherever you have a [person], there you have personality, and there is no trace by which one personality may be distinguished from another so as to be set above or below" (EW 1, p. 246). Herein lies the ethical view democracy introduces: that no one of us comes in the world with a saddle on our back, while some others of us are booted and spurred to ride.<sup>18</sup> This view is the substratum of majoritarianism specifically, but democracy more generally and explains its dual quality—that is, "the people" understood as a distinct population with rights and privileges of citizenship, and "the people" understood as an

aspirational category in which new and expanded views of political society are invested. It is, in other words, what gives one faith that sacrifice can be politically redemptive. As Dewey says, capturing the dual quality of the people: “Democracy . . . has been finely termed the memory of an historic past, the consciousness of a living present, the ideal of the coming future” (EW 1, p. 240).

Sacrifice, as I attribute it to Dewey, involves a form of political action in which its redemption cannot be assured, however much we shall like to institutionalize expected outcomes.<sup>19</sup> We may put our very person and vision of the world on the line in political action, even as we eschew the certainty of outcome. Of course, returns are desired and pursued by persons in society, but the point to keep in view for us is the gap that opens between sacrifice and its redemption that places the epistemic certainty of such returns in doubt. Eschewing epistemic certainty, as we know, is the mainstay of Dewey’s philosophical outlook and underwrites his moral and political philosophy.

This outlook above creates transactions within a polity among persons that can potentially be finished or unfinished, where the latter enacts the necessity of faith. The idea of majoritarianism carries precisely this meaning because it leaves a portion of the community seeking to complete what is experienced as an unsettled transaction. Majoritarianism, as Dewey conceives of it, thus turns on the fact of incompleteness and indeterminacy that connects “The Ethics of Democracy” to what he says elsewhere.

As I will highlight in a moment, this is intensified when we move beyond electoral politics to which majoritarianism refers. Sacrifice thus finds its counterpart in the concept of faith, what Dewey describes in his 1934 work, *A Common Faith*, as a “conviction that some end *should* be supreme over conduct,” but whose authoritative force and fulfillment must ultimately run ahead of evidentiary support into a world of uncertainties (LW 9, p. 15).<sup>20</sup> The world of uncertainties to which Dewey is referring is the political world in which one is located and seeks to transform. In this section, I shall therefore revisit “The Ethics of Democracy” in order to tease out the ethical undercurrent. I will then elucidate how this undercurrent is tied to a relationship between “the people” as determinant and indeterminate, and will maintain that this relationship implies sacrifice and the possibility of redemption. All of this is meant to substantiate the tentative claims made above and will prepare the way for the importance Dewey accords faith.

### *Majority Rule and Its Ethical Undercurrent*

Let us look more carefully at Dewey’s reflections on majority rule in “The Ethics of Democracy,” reflections that I believe reveal his attentiveness to the questions and concerns that closed the previous section. In fact, Dewey shows that his commitment to organic harmony does

not completely overtake his more careful moments of reflection regarding political life:

There still appears to be in majority rule an instrument for putting all on a dead level, and allowing numerical surplus to determine the outcome. But the heart of the matter is found not in voting . . . to see where the majority lies. *It is in the process by which the majority is formed.* The minority are represented in the policy which they *force* the majority to accept in order to be a majority; the majority have the right to “rule” because their majority is not the mere sign of a surplus in numbers, but is the manifestation of the purpose of the social organism. [EW 1, p. 234 (emphasis added)]

In his view, a decision is not merely the result of a calculation in which one group—51% of the community—has the votes to carry the title majority. We often reduce democratic decision making to this calculus and this is precisely the view at work in Maine’s account. This misses, Dewey argues, the prior process majority rule entails that is bound up with voting, but extends far beyond it. The heart of the matter, he says, is in “a process by which the social organism weighs considerations and forms its consequent judgment: that the voting of the individual represents in reality, a deliberation, a tentative opinion on the part of the whole organism” (EW 1, p. 235).

Notice that already in this passage Dewey does not do what he is otherwise accused of, namely, sliding quickly from the will of the individual to the will of all, thus failing to account for the mechanism that addresses conflict. In fact, the idea of the social organism at work is informed by the distinct meaning he accords majoritarianism, thus freeing it from its narrow undifferentiated moorings. Dewey’s use of “force” in the extended passage above to capture the relationship between the minority and majority is rhetorical flare, but it illuminates the politics of contestation democracy represents. It is an ongoing drama, to appropriate Michael Walzer’s language, in which “criticism is an adversarial proceeding” among those who share the same political space.<sup>21</sup> In being so, deliberation, Dewey says, is “the instrument for putting all on a dead level.”<sup>22</sup> The very position the majority comes to occupy is formed, for that position to be deemed legitimate, through an antagonistic exchange with the minority.

He intensifies the point in the 1939 address “Creative Democracy,” broadening the politics of contestation beyond electoral politics:

Democracy is the belief that even when needs and ends or consequences are different for each individual, the habit of amicable cooperation—which may include, as in sport, rivalry and competition—is itself a priceless addition to life. To take as far as possible every conflict which arises—and *they are bound to arise*—out of the atmosphere

and medium . . . of violence as a means of settlement into that of discussion and of intelligence is to treat those who disagree—even profoundly—with us as those from whom we may learn, and in so far, as friends. [LW 14, p. 228 (emphasis added)]

The claim he elucidates in 1888 and comes to amplify in 1939 forms part of the same thought and implies several things. First, it indicates that political minorities occupy equal station with those that form the majority. “In shaping the policy,” Dewey explains, “which emerges from the conflict the minority acts a part scarcely less important than the majority” (EW 1, p. 235). He repeats this point in *The Public and Its Problems* with greater precision when he remarks: “antecedent debates, modification of views to meet the opinions of minorities, the relative satisfaction given the latter by the fact that it has had a chance and that next time it may be successful in becoming a majority” (LW 2, p. 365). Historically this equality has often been disrupted by majorities that work via economic or other social institutions to mitigate the role of the minority. Such instances indicate the democratic deficit of the polity, and they become important sites for generating questions about the material, social, and institutional conditions that deincestivize genuine deliberative exchanges. Second, this antagonistic exchange implies that while majority decisions do not wholly satisfy the minority, leaving some residue of resentment, such decisions, if they are to have legitimacy, cannot alienate the minority from the process of decision making.

This leads to a third point that Dewey develops decades later; it taps into a deeper issue regarding political minorities who may very well have *no* legal standing. Admittedly, Dewey does not appear to address this issue, and yet how he thinks about the minority nonetheless expands in the context of *The Public and Its Problems* if we focus on the term “public.” This is an important point since readers of that work might easily interpret the term as excluding the idea of minority status. This reading would simply mis-describe the work “public” does for Dewey, and its continuity with his earlier essay.

In *The Public and Its Problems*, Dewey refers to regular occurrences in which state power ossifies in the service of extant interests often to the detriment of other members of the polity. Here, one’s position as a minority is not simply determined numerically, but may be a function of not having access to institutional power. Publics, he explains, are groups seeking a systematic response to their problems, among which may be their political status. As such, they may need to “break existing political forms” (LW 2, pp. 254–55). Dewey is essentially referring to the non-ideal conditions in which political minorities may often work. This is why, he continues, transformation in the democratic state may often come about because of “revolution” (LW 2, pp. 255).<sup>23</sup> By

revolution Dewey means the kind of political work that takes place outside legal and institutional channels to achieve transformation in the name of “the people.” Political minorities thus possess “negative power” that allows them to judge and disrupt the flow of institutional power through extra-political mechanisms that flower in the form of “social forums, movements, civil associations, media, and street demonstrations.”<sup>24</sup>

From Dewey’s perspective, this is an essential component of the democratic process. But its negativity contains vivifying energy that potentially redirects political power by promoting alternative programs, conditions, and self-descriptions. Hence Dewey says, “every movement of any account in history has been the work of minorities” (LW 6, p. 189). This last statement comes in an essay entitled “Is there Hope for Politics?” which he publishes in 1931, and where he addresses the growing concern regarding political apathy. He gives the previous remark precision, when he concludes that whether there is hope for politics generally, and as it relates to specific political claims, is “finally a question of whether there is a minority having the requisite *courage, conviction, and readiness for sacrificial work*” (LW 6, p. 190 [emphasis added]). That is, sacrificial work in the service of “radical [democratic] principles” (LW 6, p. 190).

These three points are not trivial observations in Dewey’s estimation; they go to the heart of his understanding of democracy that is already at work in 1888. In “The Ethics of Democracy” and the later writings, he does not merely focus on a decision making procedure, but also on the ethical foundation upon which it rests. Hence, deliberation becomes an integral force not simply to have one’s preferences acknowledged, but to transform the entire political landscape that shapes those preferences. Even the disruptive moments of discursive contestation reflexively reinforce the extent to which one gives shape to the demos. Consider Dewey’s words on these matters:

In conception, at least, democracy approaches most nearly the ideal of all social organization . . . For this reason democracy, so far as it is really democracy, is the most stable, not the most insecure, of governments. In every other form of government there are individuals who are not organs of the common will, who are outside of the political society in which they live, and are, in effect, aliens to that which should be their own commonwealth. Not participating in the formation or expression of the common will, they do not embody it in themselves. Having no share in society, society has none in them. [EW 1, pp. 237–38]

This passage should be parsed with great care to understand what Dewey means. First, Dewey does not deny that loss forms a part of democratic life. To see this point, we need to take seriously his use of

the words, “in conception,” for they indicate the ideal thrust of democracy. And as Dewey says of the ideal sense of a concept throughout his career: “Ideals are like the stars; we steer by them, not towards them” (EW 4, p. 262; cf. MW 14, p. 156; LW 12, p. 303). “In conception,” then, means to signal the underlying impulse of democracy—that is, the way in which legitimacy is tied to a fundamental openness. Second, we are more firmly positioned to see that for Dewey the ideal thrust of democracy explains a socio-psychological orientation on the part of those who engage the demos. In other words, the political activity of individuals in the context of democracy, and amid disappointment, implicitly refers to and is guided by this ideal. The integrity of democracy thus hinges on the extent to which the minority never feels wholly apart from the process of decision making, even through the extra-political forms it may enact. This presupposition is essential for the practice of democracy to function; but more significantly, it is the basis upon which persons stand to articulate their grievances and belief that the political community is not beyond criticism and transformation.

### *Indeterminacy of the People*

The ethical undercurrent of Dewey’s argument is tied to the constitution of “the people” from which decisions follow, and yet an indeterminacy that leaves the substance of “the people” malleable. This explains the negative power referred to earlier, the deployment of which is in the service of trying to have the aspirational description of “the people” actualized in formal institutions, practices, and modes of being. But only six years after “The Ethics of Democracy” in an 1894 essay, “Austin’s Theory of Sovereignty,” Dewey seemingly moves away from this view by identifying “the people” with “definite [participatory] organs.” As he explains: “Except as sovereignty secures for itself definite and definable modes of expression, sovereignty is unrealized and inchoate” (EW 4, p. 90). Insofar as some are excluded from participating in and giving direction to these definite organs they stand wholly apart from political society that otherwise exercises power over them. This is the point made in 1888 and cited above: “Having no share in society, society has none in them.” But he takes great care, however, in the early parts of that 1894 essay to see these organs as a mechanism for *mere* expression rather than a means to determine the content of that expression once and for all (EW 4, p. 73). And he chides theorists both in 1894 and 1888 for defining democracy in terms of authorship—“an error which, so far as acted upon, is likely to result in harm” (EW 4, p. 73; cf. EW 1, pp. 235–37).

Why focus on the problem of authorship for understanding the impermanence of “the people”? Why would the focus on authorship result in harm? To answer these questions requires us to first say a word about the organic metaphor that Dewey abandons by the turn of the

twentieth century. This is not simply an observation about Dewey's intellectual development, but awareness on his part of social complexity that required more careful attention. In a 1939 biographical sketch, he reflects on his earlier commitment to idealism and its relationship to societal unity, arguing that his affirmation of harmony required a transformation far more attentive to the ways conflict empirically defied the movement toward social harmony: "[T]he Hegelian emphasis upon continuity and the function of conflict persisted on empirical grounds after my earlier confidence in dialectic had given way to skepticism."<sup>25</sup> Dewey partly misspeaks here because his commitment to idealism was owed more to the British idealists than to Hegel properly speaking.<sup>26</sup> Notwithstanding this fact, notice that his commitment to social harmony has a different source. In this regard, Dewey's use of "empirical grounds" acknowledges the persistence of uncertainty in democratic life, and this figures prominently in both his social theory and reflection on knowledge formation in the wake of his embrace of Darwinian evolution.<sup>27</sup> In fact, the idea central to *The Public and Its Problems*—namely, "the Public"—is deceptive precisely because for Dewey it is a politicized sphere in which citizens seek to translate the grievances of specific publics into state power, disrupting the idea of "the people" as a static signifier (LW 2, pp. 245–56). As I have explained elsewhere, and Robert Westbrook so keenly observes: "*The Public* was . . . a collective noun designating plural publics that concerned themselves with the indirect consequences of particular forms of associated activity."<sup>28</sup>

In *The Public and Its Problems* Dewey specifically returns to the problem of authorship that he discussed in 1888 and 1894, but now without the metaphor that mis-described what he was otherwise after. As he writes, theorists of democracy have mistakenly "sought for the key to the nature of the state [and therefore the identity of "the people"] in the field of agencies, in that of doers of the deeds, or in some will or purpose back of deeds. They have sought to explain the state in terms of authorship" (LW 2, p. 247). His point is that authorship wrongly refers the meaning and direction of the state back to antecedent interests. But this, he argues, prevents the state from being attentive to new and emergent claims within, and consequences of, political life. Or another way to make the point is to say that for Dewey preoccupation with authorship mistakenly fixes the identity of "the people" with respect to prior concerns (which may well be exclusionary), making the state inattentive to the potential problems resulting from decision making and political life. He refers to this as a failure of "perceiving in a discriminating and thorough way the consequences of human action (including negligence and inaction) and of instituting measures and means of caring for these consequences" (LW 2, p. 249).

Alternatively, by not fixing the identity of "the people," Dewey argues, we guard against a domineering majoritarianism, and adhere

more sincerely to democracy's ethical ideal. Hence he says that democracy "must be continually explored afresh; it has to be constantly discovered, and rediscovered, remade and reorganized" (LW 11, p. 182). The end result of this remaking is to potentially redeem sacrifices made and to redirect the meaning of "the people." This is the deliberative process to which Dewey referred earlier that serves to mitigate the remainders of disappointment by bringing to light what would otherwise go unacknowledged. Dewey's aim, then, is to redirect attention away from authorship, so that citizens and political institutions can potentially be responsive. This responsiveness follows from an awareness of the impermanence of "the people." This is precisely why he says in *The Public and Its Problems* that the state, referring to an administrative apparatus that manifests the desires of the community, "is ever something to be scrutinized, investigated, and searched for" (LW 2, p. 255). And he argues in that work, reaffirming points made in 1888 and 1894, that "what the *faithful* insist upon . . . is that the idea [of democracy] and its external organs and structures are not to be identified" (LW 2, p. 325[emphasis added]).

The normative significance of this point is that while the voice of "the people" is always unified via its institutional mechanisms, its tenor and content is never permanently settled—that is, in a democracy no embodiment of power, whether in the law, public agencies, or a majority opinion, is beyond reproach. Herein lies his response to Maine: to render the identity of "the people" determinant once and for all is *ipso facto* to render the regime undemocratic; it is to reduce the minority to the status of an alien or stranger to the demos, something Dewey refuses to do. In fact, this better explains his aversion in "The Ethics of Democracy" to the idea that society is composed of "one interest or will," and his corresponding belief that democracy contains "struggle and opposition and hostility," none of which need threaten political unity (EW 1, pp. 232–33).

### *Sacrifice and Redemption*

There are two aspects at work here—sacrifice and redemption—that requires some elucidation regarding their relationship and meaning in this context. First, sacrifice as I have attributed it to Dewey seems to cover distinct classes of sacrifice. In the first class, insofar as we keep majoritarianism in view, sacrifice refers merely to being outvoted and thus finding oneself in a temporary, but reversible position as a minority. So one's loss can hurt, but presumably there are constitutional and political limits on how severe anyone's losses can be when a bill or case goes against them. In the second class, sacrifice seems to refer to repressed minorities. Hence the passing reference to African Americans, where the locus of repression is defined by the absence of legal standing that is wholly involuntary. But one might say, and rightfully so, that the

latter is far removed from the ups and downs of everyday legislative and judicial struggle. Something more needs to be said so as not to collapse the distinction between the two.

We keep the two in view insofar as the relevant minority works internal or external to the overall political process. This is the point addressed earlier, the logic of which was distilled from Dewey's *The Public and Its Problems*. The two descriptions are significant when "minority" signifies marginalization, and not merely numeric inferiority. For when minorities are marginalized, they are susceptible to the vagaries of the political process to which they do not belong. Hence my earlier reference to those occasions when minorities work external to institutional processes to reshape its meaning, and the claim that this argument is within the boundaries of Dewey's account of the public. It is precisely for this reason that the second class of sacrifices refers to a more troubling kind of vulnerability that minorities experience, and why the ethical undercurrent that Dewey emphasizes in 1888 becomes all the more important. It points to the possibility of transforming the political world one inhabits, and not simply preferences within that world. This second class of sacrifices, we might say, is an involuntary fact of one's repression, and yet it is precisely the involuntary quality of sacrifice amid one's petitions to change political life that require faith in redemption. If this is right, the idea of redemption, as I shall explain below, becomes a powerful political ideal because of the kind of transformative aspiration that guides it.

Second, redemption as I have attributed it to Dewey entails the restorative possibility latent within the ideal of democracy. Hence the ethical dimension of democracy is coextensive with, but, for Dewey, nonetheless extends beyond majoritarianism. This is precisely why the 1888 essay is entitled the *ethics* of democracy. The claim is that the unfolding of democracy can potentially answer the concerns of those who are aggrieved, giving meaning to their sacrifices. The possibility of redemption means that involuntary sacrifices need not be in vain. And if we think, for example, of groups that have no political standing, their petitions are attempts to reshape the boundaries of the polity and the meaning of their standing therein. As I argue in the next section, redemption blurs imperceptibly into the idea of faith that what the voice of "the people" means at one time need not be its final or only meaning.

### *The Necessity of Faith*

Thus far I have discussed how the idea of sacrifice is tied to Dewey's view regarding the impermanence of "the people." I have maintained that this approach connects the early essay to his much later reflections, and reveals that "The Ethics of Democracy" does not easily succumb to the criticisms that have been raised against it. A concern may emerge at

precisely this moment. How does this relationship between impermanence and sacrifice imply faith? After all, given how Dewey understands majoritarianism and the role of the minority therein, democratic citizens seem to be relieved from having to rely on faith. You might think that even the non-electoral displays of this impermanence that he comes to discuss in his later works seemingly generate restoration. Is it not the case that insofar as Dewey's work can be seen as institutionalizing sacrifice and redemption, his understanding of democracy necessarily dispenses with the uncertainty faith otherwise entails?

By way of conclusion, I would like to answer the question in the negative, bringing into view the importance Dewey accords faith. As suggested by the previous section, the redemptive possibility latent within democracy can only be posited as a regulative ideal that orients citizens. In other words, there can be no way for citizens to know in advance of acting that their sacrifice will be redeemed, especially in contexts where the sources to which citizens will typically turn are those already wielding power. This is precisely why even majority rule is not simply institutionalized uncertainty in which minorities calculate that it would not be in their interest to destroy the system.<sup>29</sup>

The commitment problem emerges even more poignantly in cases where one has no legal standing and so must necessarily work through extra-political forms. This indicates that we cannot simply analyze the surface of democratic politics to find out all that is at work. Reflecting on the problem of ossified power that Dewey mentions in *The Public and Its Problems*, we might think, for example, of the legally instantiated power of white males in the American context—power that formed in direct resistance to the demands of women and blacks seeking equality. Both cases, the one where grievances are expressed via the vote and the other through extra-political forms, reveal the danger of democratic institutions that is not simply avoided through a cost benefit analysis or the existence of a constitutional framework. For example, the end of Reconstruction in 1877 and reaffirmation of terror against blacks on the one hand, and Proposition 8 that rescinded rights in California that were extended to same sex couples on the other, signal that democracy can potentially result in harm to the interests of minorities if political life is allowed to persist unchanged. As Dewey explains, democratic decisions are neither necessarily right nor just because of “the number of persons who accept it” (LW 12, p. 484 n. 4). This is something to which American history can attest, but which rarely, if ever, destroys steadfast commitment by minorities to the polity.<sup>30</sup> This is precisely why, as indicated above, Dewey explicates the underlying ethical character of majoritarianism that for him generates legitimacy.

Of course, past experiences of improving relationships within the polity and correcting wrongs are meaningful; they suggest that faith may not be misplaced. But past experiences can never completely justify such

faith and so cannot be an assurance that democracy's restorative powers will be realized in the actions of political actors. If political agents matter in politics and are simultaneously the site of uncertainty, then it seems that the necessity of faith is ineliminable. Recall Dewey's claim, first articulated in "The Ethics of Democracy" and reiterated in *The Public and Its Problems*, that contestation provides "relative satisfaction" to the minority, a sense that it "may" redirect the energy of the people in addressing its extant grievances. This tentativeness is precisely what opens the gap between sacrifice on the one hand and its redemption on the other, and that leaves citizens suspended in an uncertain space defined by an incomplete transaction between them and their fellows. This is why, for example, Martin Luther King Jr.'s defiance (no less than the rank and file supporting Civil Rights) often strike us as terribly courageous.

How do we render the actions of someone like King intelligible—the fact that he and others often stand within this uncertain space? After all, in the context of American political and moral development, King is not alone in occupying this uncertain space. We can easily apply the logic to abolitionists, women fighting for equal rights, and same sex couples. The answer requires us to see that these individuals and groups are running ahead of the evidence needed to justify the ground upon which they stand. It is not only that their faith contains specific political content, as for example when they call on America to recognize the equal status of women or blacks, but their faith is expressive of an orientation to the process of democratic politics itself that presupposes the fluidity of "the people." Or, to put it in Dewey's language, their orientation is expressive of what he has referred to in the previous section as the ethics of democracy. They have faith that their fellows will be moved to transformation—an outward expression of seeing "the people" as indeterminate—and it is precisely this faith that sustains them during their sacrificial moments.<sup>31</sup>

The point we have been making with respect to Dewey, is forcefully articulated by King amid the racial subordination of the 1950s and 1960s: "I realize that this approach [petitioning the people] will mean suffering and sacrifice. It may mean going to jail. . . . It may even mean physical death. But if physical death is the price that a man must pay to free his children and his white brethren from a permanent death of the spirit, then nothing could be more redemptive."<sup>32</sup> King is at once advancing a claim about the ethical undercurrent of democracy that stimulates action, even as he concedes the possibility that the nation may not fully act in accordance with the demand of democracy as it relates to African-Americans. While it is true that King's understanding of uncertainty emanates from his theological anthropology whereas Dewey's emerges from his naturalistic commitments, both accounts chasten, in similar ways, the practical vision of democracy offered. And as Dewey indicated in the previous section and King well knew, there is

no way to reconfigure political life without positing “the people” as an indeterminate category. In fact, it is this indeterminacy that fuels King’s famous “dream”—that is, a vision of American democracy not yet actualized, but which potentially transforms suffering from a passive state into an active engine for change. Grounded in democratic faith, one suffers in a “creative manner,” King explains, “feeling that unearned suffering is redemptive, and that suffering *may* serve to transform the social situation.”<sup>33</sup>

We can amplify the point with reference to Dewey’s 1934 work, *Common Faith*. The focus of this work is to explicate an account of religious piety and faith that squares with democratic commitments; it does this, however, by locating democratic transformation in pronouncements of faith. Dewey means for these pronouncements to take place in both the legislative halls of Congress as well as the extra-political sites in which contestation takes place. Faith, he explains, thus directs citizens “through allegiance to . . . ideal ends, which imagination presents to us and to which the human will responds as worthy of controlling our desires and choices” no matter the context (LW 9, p. 23). The content of one’s faith—that is, the specific ideals—emerge as a response to “evil[s] . . . we would have otherwise” (LW 9, p. 31). It seeks not simply to mend a breach which lies deep within the self, but the community to which one belongs, making possible a world that does not yet exist (LW 9, pp. 31–32, cf. 58). Indeed, it is the relationship between the two that chastens the content of one’s faith—that prevents it from being mere fantasy (LW 9, pp. 30). In saying this, he specifically rejects the view that sees faith as a “kind of anticipatory vision of things that are now invisible because of the limitation of our finite and erring natures” (LW 9, pp. 14–15).

Describing faith in this way, Dewey says, often reifies the objects to which faith refers—namely, why some ideal or value ought to have allegiance. But it also obscures the existential horizon of contingency in which faith is located. As he explains, “for all endeavor for the better is moved by faith in what is possible, not by adherence to the actual. The outcome, given our best endeavor, is not with us” (LW 9, p. 17). The controlling factor here, why the outcome is not with us, is constitutively connected with the uncertain future on which action depends. “The good,” Dewey says elsewhere, “involves a radical venture of the will in the interest of what is unseen and prudentially incalculable” (MW 5, p. 371). This is why redemption cannot be assured. To think otherwise, is to render unintelligible the attribution of courage we attach to King, for instance; but more precisely, it threatens to attribute to democratic life more security than we are likely to find. Hence King’s deployment of the auxiliary verb, when he claimed that suffering “*may*” serve to change political life. Here, indeed, is the necessity upon which the relationship between “the people” and the minority

which nonetheless belongs to it is based: the redemption of sacrifice is a faith-based claim, a view of what is possible that is always groping after actualization in democratic politics, and which simultaneously justifies sacrifice from the outset. Yet this comes into view, following Dewey (and now King), only because the tension between determinacy and indeterminacy describes not only who “the people” are, but who they may yet become.

To say, as I have, that redemption is always groping after actualization is to say that redemption is not a one shot deal that results from some constellation of political acts. To think, for instance, that the extension of the franchise to women and blacks constitute the redemption of sacrifices made is to obscure the on-going and iterative process democracy entails. And this is for at least two reasons. First, the kind of harm that will have typically resulted has deep social-psychological roots that will generate resentment and ongoing deleterious effects that need to be addressed. Second, there are often institutional effects that remain. Here the issue is not about the social-psychological dimension of life which may very well be about the mundane interactions among citizens, but the distribution of benefits and burdens that continue to be unfairly handled within the basic structure of society—that is, educational, political, economic, and health related structures—even amid the constitutional protections that may be established. Hence Dewey understands democracy as a task before us, indicating that the iterative dimension leaves political life open to advances and declines. As he says, “progress is not steady and continuous. Retrogression is as periodic as advance” (LW 2, p. 254).

Dewey is drawing our attention to two claims that relate to the sovereignty of the people on the one hand and the actions of political life through which that sovereignty seeks articulation on the other. For him the two claims are mutually implicated, but this is missed if we merely side with his critics—something I have cautioned against. First, the sovereignty of the people expresses a Promethean intervention to redirect the course of things. This is the sense that we, as citizens, construct the laws that we freely give ourselves. Sovereignty, as Dewey knows all too well, represents that wonderful sense of being a free human being who penetrates the future in an effort to exercise mastery over the forces that would otherwise control one’s destiny.

Second, the true meaning of that freedom, its transformative possibility, locates itself elsewhere. Sovereignty can only be expressed through discreet political acts that move in the social world, seeking a positive nod rather than a discouraging nay from one’s fellows. Hence Dewey’s argument about the role of deliberation in “The Ethics of Democracy.”<sup>34</sup> It is precisely the uncertainty such an intervention implies—dependent as it is on “faith in what is possible” rather than “adherence to the actual”—that underscores the non-sovereignty of democratic

action. Action proper, Dewey explains, “is set in the invisible; and in the end what is unseen decides what happens in the seen; the tangible rests precariously upon the untouched. The . . . potential maladjustment of the immediate . . . with those direct and hidden factors which determine the origins and career of what is present, are indestructible features of any and every experience” (LW 1: 44). To be sure, the uncertainty that accrues to democratic action contains within itself the possibility of redirecting “the people,” reminding us, who may well be the political minority, of our sovereignty. But for Dewey, it equally places us in a position where we court adverse consequences from which we cannot finally be relieved, and in which we can only see ourselves through with faith.

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## NOTES

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2. John Dewey, "The Ethics of Democracy" (1888), in *The Early Works of John Dewey, 1882–1898*, vol. 1, ed. Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1969), 227–49. If not otherwise stated, my citations to Dewey's work will be in-text according to the collected works published in Carbondale and I will use the following abbreviations followed by volume number: EW for *The Early Works, 1882–1898*; MW for *The Middle Works, 1899–1924*; and LW for *The Later Works, 1925–1953*.

3. This is the conclusion with which deliberative democrats are concerned to avoid: See Jurgen Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms*, trans. William Rehg (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996), 126–28; Seyla Benhabib, "Deliberative Rationality and Models of Democratic Legitimacy." *Constellations* 1 (April, 1994): 26–52; Cass Sunstein, "Beyond the Republican Revival," *The Yale Law Journal* 97 (July, 1998): 1539–90.

4. See generally Quentin Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, vol. II (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1978); Danielle Allen, *Talking to Strangers: Anxieties of Citizenship since Brown v. Board of Education* (Chicago:

University of Chicago Press, 2004), ch. 6; John Dunn, *Democracy: A History* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2005), chaps. 1–2.

5. This aspirational view has been pursued most recently and powerfully in Jason Frank, *Constituent Moments: Enacting the People in Post-Revolutionary America* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010). It should be noted that the connection between the aspirational view and themes such as sacrifice, redemption, and faith go unexplored in that context.

6. Here I have in mind King's writings on the philosophy behind nonviolence in which he describes sacrifice and faith as constitutively connected. See, for instance, the following although not an exhaustive list of the relevant essays: King, "The Power of Nonviolence" (1958); "An Experiment in Love" (1958), "My Trip to the Land of Gandhi" (1959), "Suffering and Faith" (1960), "Love, Law, and Civil Disobedience" (1961), "Nonviolence: The Only Road to Freedom" (1966), "A Gift of Love" (1966), "Letter from Birmingham City Jail" (1963) in *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King Jr.*, ed. James M. Washington (New York: Harper One, 1986), pp. 12–21, 23–31, 41–62, 289–303.

7. William James, "The Sentiment of Rationality" (1880), in *The Will to Believe and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy* (New York: Dover, 1956), p. 90. The idea of faith I defend also has affinities with the term "hope." See Christopher Lasch, *The True and Only Heaven: Progress and Its Critics* (New York: Norton, 1991), p. 81; Patrick Shade, *Habits of Hope: A Pragmatic Theory* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2001); Robert Westbrook, *Democratic Hope: Pragmatism and the Politics of Truth* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2005).

8. Sir Henry Maine, *Popular Government* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1885/1976), p. 187. Unless otherwise stated, my citations to Maine's work will be in-text with the following abbreviation: PG.

9. Bernard Yack, "Popular Sovereignty and Nationalism," *Political Theory* 29 (2001): 519.

10. On the importance of such imagery to nineteenth century social theory see Henry Jones, "The Social Organism," in *Essays in Philosophical Criticism*, eds. Andrew Seth and R. B. Haldane (London: Longmans, Green, 1883); Stefan Collini, "Sociology and Idealism in Britain, 1880–1920," *Archives Européennes de Sociologie* 19 (1978): 3–50.

11. Alfonso J. Damico, *Individuality and Community: The Social and Political Thought of John Dewey* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1978), pp. 40–41; Alan Ryan, *John Dewey and the High Tide of American Liberalism* (New York: Norton, 1995), pp. 102–05; Axel Honneth, "Democracy as Reflexive Cooperation: John Dewey and the theory of Democracy Today," *Political Theory* 26, no. 6 (1998): 763–83.

12. I am not making the questionable claim that there is a causal connection between Dewey and King, although the latter read the former. My claim here is ideational—that is, a background horizon of meanings in which they can be said to work.

13. For a good discussion of the specificity of these attacks see Benjamin Evans Lippincott, *Victorian Critics of Democracy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1938).

14. Rousseau, *Social Contract*, Bk. II, ch. III.

15. Honneth, "Reflexive Cooperation," p. 767; cf. p. 770.

16. Ryan, *John Dewey and the High Tide*, p. 105.

17. Dewey's relationship to these thinkers is taken up by a number of scholars. See Neil Coughlin, *Young John Dewey* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975); Jennifer Welchman, *Dewey's Ethical Thought* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), pp. 29–43; Robert Westbrook, *John Dewey and American Democracy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), pp. 13–33; Ryan, *John Dewey and the High Tide*, ch. 3; James Good, *A Search for Unity in Diversity: The Permanent Hegelian Deposit in the Philosophy of John Dewey* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2005).

18. This is a slightly amended formulation of Leveller, Colonel Richard Rumbold, shortly before his hanging. See *The Dying Speeches of Several Excellent Persons who Suffered from their Zeal against Popery and Arbitrary Government* (London, 1689), p. 24 <Early English Books Online: <http://www.eebo.chadwyck.com>>. Also cited in Dunn, *Democracy*, p. 211 n. 160.

19. Cf. Allen, *Talking to Strangers*.

20. The view of democratic faith I attribute to Dewey differs substantially from what can be found in Patrick Deneen's treatment of the topic. See his, *Democratic Faith* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), chs. 1–2 and 9.

21. Michael Walzer, *Interpretation and Social Criticism* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1987), p. 82.

22. In later works, Dewey specifically theorizes deliberation and its importance to democracy. See Dewey, *Human Nature and Conduct*, MW 14, chs. 16–17, *Ethics*, LW 7, pp. 298–301, *Logic*, LW 12, ch. 9. A number of thinkers specifically invoke the contemporary tradition of "deliberative democracy" when discussing Dewey, even if they disagree on how best to understand his connection to this contemporary debate. See, for example, Richard Bernstein, *Philosophical Profiles* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1987); Hilary Putnam, "A Reconsideration of Deweyan Democracy," in *Pragmatism in Law and Society*, ed. Michael Brint and William Weaver (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991), pp. 217–47; Matthew Festenstein "Deliberative Democracy and Two Models of Pragmatism," *European Journal of Social Theory* 7 (2004): 291–306; Honneth, "Democracy as Reflective Cooperation," 763–83.

23. Here Dewey ironically, albeit partially, joins Sheldon Wolin who otherwise believes that Dewey has no account of the pernicious role of power and so is without a radical dimension to his work. See Wolin, *Politics and Vision* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), ch. 14. For a fuller response to Wolin on this point see, Melvin L. Rogers, *The Undiscovered Dewey: Religion, Morality, and the Ethos of Democracy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), ch. 5.

24. The language here is taken from Nadia Urbinati, although employed differently. See Urbinati, *Representative Democracy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), pp. 28–29.

25. Quoted in Jane Dewey, "Biography of John Dewey," in *The Philosophy of John Dewey*, ed. Paul A. Schilpp and Lewis Edwin Hahn (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1939), p. 18.

26. As James Good explains the metaphysical monism that is often seen as problematic in Dewey is owed to his reading of the British idealists, and that in his early engagement with Hegel he often revealed himself to be far more careful and

appreciative of the pluralism at the core of Hegel's thought. See Good, *A Search for Unity*.

27. On this point see Rogers, *Undiscovered Dewey*, ch. 2.

28. Westbrook, *John Dewey*, p. 305; cf. Rogers, *Undiscovered Dewey*, pp. 225–31.

29. This point is typically made by those who see majority rule as merely a mechanism of stability. See Giuseppe Di Palma, *To Craft Democracies: An Essay on Democratic Transitions* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990); Adam Przeworski, *Democracy and the Market* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 20–22.

30. No place is this more clearly on display than in the history of racial equality in America. See Philip A. Klinker and Rogers Smith, *The Unsteady March: The Rise and Decline of Racial Equality in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

31. This orientation does not wholly define the radical tradition in American political thought. I am leaving unexplored another dimension that proceeds from the belief that one's fellows cannot be transformed precisely because the meaning of "the people" has been resolved—a view often expressed, for example, by the Garrisonians in their call for disunion in the latter part of the 1830s. These thinkers, we must observe, did not start out from this position, however (see Robert Fanuzzi, *Abolition's Public Sphere* [Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003], ch. 2). Rather, they slowly came to occupy this stance out of a sincere belief that their interlocutors were beyond reproach. Coming to occupy this position was undoubtedly helped by the imposition of the 1836 "gag rule" on petitions relating to slavery by the House of Representatives. Faith in the possibility that one's fellows will be transformed had run its course. But in its wake, a new faith was left in the redeeming possibility of disunion—that from the ashes of dissolution, a new world might yet emerge. The difference, then, between King on the one side and the Garrisonians on the other is the latter's attempt to violently break with the existing order, a sense that the discursive field could no longer manage difference and redeem extant sacrifices. On this latter position see Joel Olson, "The Freshness of Fanaticism: The Abolitionist Defense of Zealotry," *Perspectives on Politics* 5, no. 4 (2007): 685–701.

32. King, "The Rising Tide of Racial Consciousness," in *Testament of Hope*, p. 149.

33. King, "Love, Law, and Civil Disobedience," in *Testament of Hope*, p. 47 (emphasis added).

34. Although I am unable to pursue the matter here, from the perspective of African Americans and women in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century, the meaning of deliberation is far more capacious in that rhetoric as a mode of persuasion and appeal to the sentiments achieved primacy as they sought to expand the boundaries of political society.