Dissent and Democracy: A New Imperative for the Global Community

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Abstract:

This project begins with an analysis of social dissent. The methods, dynamics, and motivations of dissent are examined in such a way that it can be used as a tool to probe the foundation of social relationships. From this, I explore and critique classical liberalism's connection to democracy and claims of universality. I go on to argue that a concept of organism, as outlined by John Dewey in his theory of organic democracy, is a more adequate model of sociality than liberalism. Organic democracy is not without its own problems, however. I attempt to address the ethical dilemmas that arise from a notion of organic democracy by examining it from a global perspective and evolutionary perspective.
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Approval

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Introduction: Democracy's Keepers

The Age of Enlightenment brought many things to humanity, but democracy was not one of them. Yet we in the Western world, as children of the Enlightenment, continually point to the democratic way of life as the most beneficial novelty to come from that age. Not only is this "discovery" hailed as the end result of enlightened thinking, but it is also seen as a tool that other cultures must utilize if they are to associate with the West. The liberal democratic societies of the world have established themselves not only as the defenders of democracy, but also as its interpreters. They believe they have authored the finest political system in human history and any competition or attempt at modification is considered heresy. The keepers of democracy see their political systems as the keys to success; but it is a success that they defined, and the systems they have crafted are not as simple as they would have others to believe.

In this paper I argue that democracy is not new, is not a noble end, and is certainly not a gift that can be given. I will articulate a new conception of democracy based upon the dynamics of dissent, a social phenomenon that seems to occur, in some form, at every level of every society, past and present. In other words, dissent is a universal social phenomenon and by analyzing it as such, I intend to show that there are aspects of democracy that are universal as well. To make the prospect of a universal democratic order less problematic, I will critique the notion of liberal democracy and argue that democracy is not necessarily tied to liberalism. From this I will examine universal democracy in terms of John Dewey's idea of organic democracy. Finally, I will address the resulting problems of pairing a universal social order with a notion of organism by approaching the matter from global and evolutionary perspectives.
Part I: Dissent and Difference

1. Difference - The Fuel of Dissent

As Socrates is returning to Athens in the opening lines of the Republic, he is accosted by men who would have him stay the night with them and discuss philosophy. This short exchange between Socrates and Polemarchus' men, beyond the walls of the city, shows a social order outside of the formal structures of government. Socrates was convinced to acquiesce to the wishes of Polemarchus and the others by both peaceful persuasion and the threat of force. To put this in a context better suited to our discussion, the followers of Polemarchus formed a majority against which Socrates and Glaucon were in dissent. To combat this dissent, Polemarchus first pointed to the quantitative majority of his group. This, however, did not assure victory. "You must either then prove yourselves the better men or stay here," Polemarchus told Socrates and Glaucon. The two homeward bound travelers then had the chance of forming their own majority in a qualitative way, by proving they were the better men. Fortunately for readers of the discussion to follow, the way Socrates would prefer to do this, through discourse, was closed off to him by the assertion of Polemarchus that he and his men would not listen. At this point, the matter was settled; Socrates and Glaucon would return with the others. However, Polemarchus wished to eliminate the dissent and form a consensus. To accomplish this, he persuaded Socrates and Glaucon to desire to stay by informing them of the festivities to come. In this way, the dissent was eradicated without removing the dissenters. Those in dissent became part of the majority.

The reason for Socrates' dissent against Polemarchus' majority was simple. He and Glaucon desired to go home more than they desired to stay. Their desires were in conflict with those who

became the majority that would influence them. To look at the source of this conflict is to look at the source of difference within all social groups. A discussion of difference is not the goal of this paper, but it is important to note both dissent and democracy's connection to this greater metaphysical issue. Whether or not different desires and opinions are entirely socially created or stem from some other source is important, but it is possible for our discussion to continue without deciding this matter as long as we accept that there are differences of opinion and desire, and that these differences are often manifested socially.

2. A Definition of Dissent

The definition of dissent that will be used in this discussion has two aspects, both of which are necessary. The first is the standard understanding of dissent. A person who disagrees with certain aspects of a norm, judgment, or other standard that is held to be the common view is said to be in dissent. Certainly a person can dissent against some things and not against others, and the degree to which they dissent can change as easily as their personal opinions. The source of dissent, as articulated by James Madison in the *Federalist Papers*, is "sown in the nature of man," and comes from a "zeal for different opinions concerning religion, concerning government, and many other points, as well as speculation as of practice; an attachment to different leaders ambitiously contending for pre-eminence and power; or to persons of other descriptions." Ultimately, dissent is based on personal opinion, but this does not diminish its reality or its importance. As will be shown later, these personal opinions, with their myriad influences, are the basis of democracy.

The second part of the definition of dissent deals with its practical effects. Dissent is only a personal opinion until it is made known to others. What separates dissent from opinion is the

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inherent social nature of dissent. It is socially meaningless to say that one is dissenting unless others are made aware of the dissent, and it is in the effects that this awareness has on others that dissent is born. In other words, the practical effects of dissent - the awareness that there is a dissenting opinion - are necessary to its definition. The pragmatic criterion, as articulated by Charles Sanders Peirce, is useful here: "Consider what effects which might conceivably have practical bearings, we conceive the object of our conception to have. Then, our conception of these effects is the whole of our conception of the object." Applied socially, and in the context of our discussion, we can look at religion as an example. Although individual members of a particular denomination may have views that differ from their church's official dogma, by calling themselves Catholic, Methodist, or Baptist, for example, and attending services, they are proclaiming publicly that the official views are their views as well. An appropriate reformulation of the pragmatic criterion could be articulated as: "Consider the social relations of an individual. Our conception of these relations is the whole of our conception of the social function of the individual." The way we conceive of an individual's relations can, of course, be modified by the individual. For example, unless an individual articulates his or her take on Catholic doctrine, he or she will simply appear as a standard Catholic to us - whatever our conception of that may be.

This second part of the definition is what gives dissent its power. To make a person aware that there exists a different opinion is to instill in that person the seed of their own dissent. It is also what creates a network of dissenters. Even though a large multitude of individuals may hold what are, in fact, dissenting opinions, unless they make this fact known to others, they are not truly dissenting. Someone must dissent openly, declaring their dissent explicitly, for it to have

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any power. This shows others who have similar opinions that they are not alone and gives them an outlet for their dissent.

3. Examples of Dissent

To clarify the two-part definition of dissent, some examples are needed. To begin with the hypothetical, imagine a small group of people with a designated leader. Any number of individuals in the group may disagree with the direction the leader is taking them, but they remain silent and they do nothing to indicate to others their disagreement. They may hold conflicting personal opinions, but they continue to follow orders and work as if their opinions were the same as those of the leader. However, if even one of them begins to show dissatisfaction with the leadership, either through an overt declaration or subversion, and a peer notices, then the opinion has become dissent. Those who notice the dissent of the first (and it is truly dissent now, because it has been noticed) now realize that others have similar opinions about their leader. They can now begin to share complaints, plan possible action, and generally pool their powers to effect change.

Consider the U.S. civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s. Although almost every African American immediately prior to the beginning of the movement disagreed with the prevailing thought of the time, this had little effect. It took overt action, from Rosa Parks through Martin Luther King, Jr., and others to focus these opposing viewpoints into effective dissent. However, if members of the black community were aware of the viewpoints of their peers prior to Parks' refusal to give up her seat, why had dissent not already begun? This example calls for a further illumination of the complexity of dissent.

It seems that dissent can be divided into two stages: declaration and action. The declaration stage is the creating of the awareness of dissent in the minds of others. As mentioned previously,
dissent cannot exist without this stage. Although dissent could be said to exist without being active, it is impotent. Additionally, these two stages are not always separate. For example, in the small group of hypothetical workers under a single leader, if an individual had stood up and challenged the leader's authority without first declaring his dissenting opinions to his peers, he would be both acting and declaring at the same time. Here we see that action is not all that different from declaration, except in its target. The declaration stage shows other possible dissenters that there is a differing opinion; the action stage shows the same thing to those who hold or support the prevailing opinion. It is not always easy to recognize the difference.

4. Difficulty of Dissent

The example of a man who openly voices his dissent to those against whom he is dissenting, without first knowing if his peers support him, shows the difficulty that may be associated with the act of dissent. It takes courage to show difference to the world, although the courage needed depends on a variety of factors: 1) The most notable factor is the degree of variance. How radically different are the opinions in question from the norm? 2) Related to this is the degree to which the society in question tolerates difference. In tighter societies, where different opinions, attitudes, and beliefs are discouraged, the separation between the declaration stage and action stage is almost nonexistent, for the very idea of a differing opinion is considered an act of dissent against the whole. Although this makes dissent more difficult, it also makes it more potent because it will stand in such stark contrast to the norm. 3) Following from the previous two factors is the amount of support for a dissenting idea. An idea that differs little from the norm will likely have far more support. Likewise, it will be easier to find supporters in a loose society that is tolerant of difference. It requires less courage to dissent if you know that there is a community that will stand behind you. Madison explains this well in Federalist #49: "If it be
true that all governments rest on opinion, it is no less true that the strength of opinion in each individual, and its practical influence on his conduct, depend much on the number which he supposes to have entertained the same opinion.\textsuperscript{4}

However, there are personal opinions that are manifested socially and that do differ from the norm yet are not considered dissent. These are such issues from which dissenting minorities form, yet the majority, because of a sense of tolerance for a particular type of difference, is not threatened. For example, five out of six people in line at an ice-cream shop may order chocolate, while the sixth person orders vanilla. That sixth person has socially expressed a personal opinion that differs from the majority that had just been formed, but the majority is not out to destroy him. Neither was it difficult for the sixth person to go against the will of the majority, because he or she likely knew that they simply did not care about another individual’s personal ice-cream preference. Although there are easily identifiable majorities and minorities that can be formed for certain issues, the same dynamics of dissent are not present if those issues are widely considered to be matters of personal choice, such as ice-cream preference, music preference, or even, in some societies, political party preference. Of course, the types of things that are considered personal choice differ from culture to culture and are affected by historical, social, and cultural contexts. Furthermore, the scope of tolerance – the line between what is considered issues of personal preferences and what is an area for social concern – is influenced by the dynamics of dissent. If a group of people began a campaign to influence people to stop eating certain flavors of ice-cream, in a society in which ice-cream preference is considered a personal choice, those people seeking to limit the choices of others would be in dissent against the majority. Tolerance itself operates according to the dynamics of dissent.

\textsuperscript{4} Madison, "Federalist #49," 311.
5. Process of Dissent

The actual business of dissent can take many forms. As shown in the previous examples, dissent can be on the scale of a small group or a massive political and cultural upheaval. The tools, actions, and specific goals of dissent can vary as widely as the scale. However, the foundation of dissent remains the desire to express an opinion that is different. Successful dissent goes past the desire and expresses opinions in order to make them the opinions of others. Dissent works simply by persuading others. This can be manifested in any number of ways, varying from force to peaceful discourse, but the goal is the same. As more and more people subscribe to the dissenting view, the view gains both support and acceptance. Its legitimacy grows as the support behind it grows, and this support can take many forms. The number of dissenters, the strength they have, and the validity of their opinions, contribute to the efficacy of the dissent.

Because of its nature, the goal of dissent is to legitimize itself out of existence. Dissent is always illegitimate to those who hold the prevailing opinion - those against whom the dissent is aimed. This is inherent in the first aspect of dissent. If it were considered to be a legitimate opinion to hold in the particular society, declaring your support for it would not be an act of dissent because there would be no difference or the difference you are expressing is within tolerable limits. The goal, therefore, is to make the dissenting opinion legitimate, thus making it no longer a form of dissent. As Robert Cummings Neville points out, King was part of "no grand story. Merely a rectifying of this particular wrong. And his dream was for freedom and community, not victory." This desire for community and not victory clearly illustrates the goal of dissent. If it had been possible for the civil rights movement to somehow achieve victory

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without community, it would have been a Pyrrhic one. If they had, for example, managed to have the agenda codified surreptitiously by some political trick, they would have only succeeded in further complicating the matter. People opposed to civil rights, in most cases, would have consented to the law, but they would have tried to work around it whenever possible. In addition, their acts would now be dissent against the rule of law. King knew a victory this way would be hollow and dangerous, so he sought the more difficult route of forming a community. His goal was to make his beliefs the beliefs of the whole, so that an actual victory would not be needed. The dynamics of this process are extremely complex, but they are the same dynamics that underlie democracy.

6. Democracy and the Success of Dissent

The success of dissent is something that cannot be quantified. Although it is not difficult to pick out examples of successful occurrences of dissent, it is nearly impossible to identify the factor that tipped the balance or the moment in which the dissenting opinion became accepted. Dissent involves innumerable social and psychological factors that do not easily lend themselves to quantification. Despite this difficulty, it is possible to explore the dynamics of dissent in a meaningful way. If we once again use the civil rights movement as an example, it is not difficult to recall a period of time in which the opinions held by King and the black community that supported him were considered dissenting. However, by the time of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the climate had changed. Certainly the job of the NAACP, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, and the various other organizations was not finished - but they were now no longer dissenters. Their new role was to fight the dissenters who were once champions of the commonly held opinion, but who now resisted the new climate of tolerance.

This example is clearly on the national scale. If one were to look regionally or locally, the
picture would be different. The proponents of civil rights might still be seen as dissenters in some areas of the southern U.S., even today. However, the groups in these areas are, in turn, considered dissenters on a larger scale. This shows the complex web of communities and social systems that make dissent and the order behind it so dynamic. The classical liberal framework attempts to simplify this process in the classical liberal way, by quantification. Liberalism attaches itself to democracy in an attempt to quantify unquantifiable human expressions of dissent and difference.

Part II: Addressing the Complexity

1. Democratic Machines

The founders of liberalism saw a flaw in the way human relations were conducted. To them, the vagueness of such issues as dissent, common will, and justice was a weakness. It was not easy to determine these or the will of the people without a proper framework. And as children of the Enlightenment, their desired framework was mathematics. Liberal democracy says, for example, that if we have two conflicting choices for an issue, and we identify the numerical majority by counting how many support choice A and how many support choice B, then we have determined the will of the people. Liberalism is certainly more complex than this, especially as articulated in the U.S. Constitution and other instances of actual practice, but this idea of quantifying the general will is at the core. Classical liberalism and all the governments and institutions that follow from it are built upon the idea of numerical calculation of the people's will by use of the decision-making mechanism of election based upon majority rule. The social component of liberalism is limited. It tells us that we are individuals - atomistic, isolated, and free - and that the only time that we must sacrifice these values is when we come together on
certain days to operate the machines that we equate with democracy. These machines are
supposed to calculate and deliver to us the best articulation of the people's will and provide
governance for us. In addition, liberalism tells us that this coming together of individuals is
optional, our natural state is devoid of social obligations, and we have all explicitly agreed to be
a part of this artificial system.

I am not attempting to argue that this system is unworkable; it clearly succeeds according to
its own definitions of success in the Western liberal democracies. What is unworkable, however,
is the two-part belief that tends to follow from liberalism: 1) this system is superior to all others
and everyone will be better off if they subscribe to it, and 2) liberalism is not simply an
abstraction, but is the real basis for social interaction.

2. Liberalism is Inadequate

The primary source of liberalism's inadequacies is its belief that human interaction can be
quantified. This is exemplified in the assertion that individuals, under liberalism, can come
together for elections and express their desires with equal voices. This abstraction does not
correspond to our experience of democracy in a liberal society or any other type of democratic
order. Some people's voices are louder than others. Some people's mastery of the machinery is
better than others. There is inequality in politics and, despite liberalism's belief that the political
can be separated from the private and the economic, this inequality is pervasive, real, and
facilitated by the very system that will not admit to its existence. Liberalism cannot and does not
attempt to account for inequalities, because an admission to this would undermine the basic
assertion that all individuals are equal in every social way. It places sole responsibility upon the
individual to lay claim to his or her equality, and if individuals are not equal in practice, then
they are simply not working hard enough.
In the matter of elections, liberalism places most of the importance on the result of the calculation. This is where the numbers come in and where a decision can be made with mathematical certainty. However, the period prior to the election is where a democracy based upon the dynamics of dissent, persuasion, and social relations really takes place. The political campaigns that define the pre-election period of democracies are where, according to H. Mark Roelofs, "by every available symbol, song, and story, by words and signs, the people are addressed, aroused, informed, challenged, in a word, assembled. And it is with the weight of their full assembly that they then speak as a sovereign people." Following from this, Roelofs suggests that all elections that are fully participated in are unanimous, for they show a healthy support for the regime, and the participation is what shows the will of the people, not the result.

This criticism is certainly not new. Dewey aptly criticizes liberalism when he develops his idea of a social organism and compares the foolishness of the machinery of democracy as a way of defining society to counting the number of cells as a way of defining a tree. He also addresses the inequality found in liberal politics, which can be explained by his idea of organic democracy, but not by liberalism: "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." In other words, the problem of majority tyranny, which so vexed the framers of the United States constitution, is only a problem in the liberal framework of isolated, atomic individuals. The majority exists at the will of the minority. Dewey's organic democracy can account for the primacy of some voices over others, because it realizes there is society of interconnected individuals that exists outside the voting booth.

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8 Ibid., 189.
3. Organic Sociality

Dewey's conception of organic democracy is of an ordered system that focuses on the interactions that occur outside the machinery that is associated with democracy. Like Roelofs, he believes that the period before an election is more important to the organism than the election itself. "A vote," according to Dewey, "is not an impersonal counting of one; it is a manifestation of some tendency of the social organism through a member of that organism."\(^9\) What is important to note here is that the tendency emerges prior to the vote. Just like the dynamics of dissent, the tendencies and wills of the organism and individuals within it are decided by opinion and persuasion. They develop outside the voting booth and independent of the machinery.

Because of the ability to separate this dynamic, which seems necessary to democracy, from the machinery and structure which now seems superfluous, Dewey declares that democracy is more than a form of government:

> Democracy, like any other polity, has been finely termed the memory of an historic past, the consciousness of a living present, the ideal of the coming future. Democracy, in a word, is a social, that is to say, an ethical conception, and upon its ethical significance is based its significance as governmental. Democracy is a form of government only because it is a form of moral and spiritual association.\(^{10}\)

Following from this, Dewey sets up a dichotomy between democracy and aristocracy. His idea of an aristocratic society is one that "always limits the range of men who are regarded as participating in the state, in the unity of purpose and destiny; and it always neglects to see that those theoretically included really obtain their well being."\(^{11}\) This idea is compelling when one looks at democracies, such as that of the United States, that are certainly democratic in many

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\(^9\) Ibid.
\(^{10}\) Ibid., 196.
\(^{11}\) Ibid., 198.
ways but also suffer from the negative effects that Dewey attributes to aristocracy. However, I believe that the social order that we have been discussing, which very much resembles organic democracy, is found in equal amounts at all points of Dewey's continuum. What Dewey is concerned with when he sets up a conflict between democracy and aristocracy is the extent to which individuals participate in society, but I hope to show that this concern is meaningless. The democracy that Dewey speaks of is, in fact, a universal organic sociality and exists underneath whatever machinery of government may be present.

4. Democracy as Universal

Faced with the knowledge of the long history of failures in human governance, it will seem problematic at best to suggestion that there is a universal democratic social order. However, this hesitancy arises out of two notions that were created when liberalism laid claim to democracy: 1) democracy is a good and 2) democracy is only concerned with quantitative majorities. Neville, in his analysis of the formation of liberal democratic thought, has placed the idea that democracy is a good together with the Enlightenment view that an individual's will can be expressed mathematically and physically. Following Newton's discovery of inertia, "Human beings... were described by Thomas Hobbes and his successors as machines whose behavior is a function of the pursuit of will, a kind of inertial force of self-continuance formed by desire, passion, or arbitrary choice."\(^{12}\) Since then, political thought has been focused on judging "the efficiency and rationality of a society, particularly its government, in allowing the individuals' inertial powers to be pursued with least deflection."\(^{13}\) Liberal democracy based on the social contract theory was then seen as the best way to "vector" these wills into a cohesive government with the least deflection. This idea of minimal deflection is seen throughout the liberal democratic tradition:

\(^{12}\) Neville, 187.

\(^{13}\) Ibid., 188.
the Declaration of Independence's protection of the "pursuit of happiness," the dominance of negative rights, and the perceived problem of majority tyranny. This results in the idea that the best government is that which governs least, and consequently, that government is liberal democracy. The equating of democracy with good only holds in the liberal framework; in reality, the presence of democracy does not insure good government.

The other side of this question comes from the liberal ideal that democracy has to be concerned with numerical majority. As shown by Dewey, Roelofs, and our analysis of dissent, the specific types of social relations that we want to attribute to democracy exist even when the machinery of democratic calculation does not. Dewey, however, feared that the efficacy of these relations could be harmed by a government not based upon participation, such as aristocracy. Because of this, he did not suggest that his organic democracy was universal. It is easy to side with Dewey when faced with the knowledge of oppression throughout history, but this neglects the concept of organism in which he himself believed:

...human society represents a more perfect organism. The whole lives truly in every member, and there is no longer the appearance of physical aggregation, or continuity. The organism manifests itself as what is truly is, an ideal or spiritual life, a unity of will. If then, society and the individual are really organic to each other, then the individual is society concentrated. He is not merely its image or mirror. He is the localized manifestation of its life.\(^{14}\)

In a social organism, it is impossible not to participate. Complacency and apathy are social manifestations of consent, as visible and perhaps as powerful as dissent. Simple existence has an effect on the whole, ontologically as well as socially. The way one operates in a society, regardless of its formal structure, is inherently social and a manifestation of one's attitude toward the organism. Aristocracy, as something opposed to organic democracy, is impossible. These

\(^{14}\) Dewey, 192.
conclusions seem potentially dangerous. If democracy rules everywhere, how can certain regimes be called unjust? How can cultural structures, now seen only as particular artificial constructs built on a general underlying foundation, retain their difference? Liberalism attempts to address these problems, but it can only do so if its premises are accepted. However, liberalism is just another idea that can be accepted or rejected according to the dynamics of dissent and organic sociality. Even if liberalism is accepted in some places, it is rejected by others; and if one takes a step back and looks at the situation from a different perspective, the same problems still exist. How can a fully liberal society call another society just or unjust if it does not share the same values, moral codes, and methods of comparison? Is there a solution to that problem that leaves room for difference? These problems are present when examining the idea of a universal organic sociality, but I intend to show that the solutions are present as well.

Part III: The Global Organism

1. Defining the Democratic Organism

The underlying democratic order we have discovered to be universal is based on the idea of organism. The fact that society is defined by the relations of the individuals, and that these individuals are defined by society, is at the core of the idea of the organism. What is not clear, however, is where the organism ends and the external world begins. Organisms are not infinite; they have boundaries. Although these boundaries might not be clear and distinct, they are there and they can be distinguished. Additionally, as Dewey has shown, not everyone has an equal relationship with the whole - some are simply louder or more powerful than others in their abilities to direct the will of the organism. This fact is problematic, for it seems to suggest that organisms can be judged (at least on one scale) by the level of egalitarianism of an individual's
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influence on the whole. This is more like the liberal notion of every voice being equal, and every
citizen having one vote. However, just as liberalism equates democracy with the good, it equates
egalitarianism with it also. It is only within the liberal framework of will as inertia that
egalitarianism is considered a good in itself. It is this kind of thinking that led to the behavior
and gift-giving mentality of democratic societies mentioned at the onset of this discussion.

Liberal democracy and its accompanying values are seen as a cure for injustice, oppression,
and general societal misfortune, because they have been perceived to be successful in the major
powers of the world. However, it must be noted that the major thinkers of liberalism grew out of
the cultures that would embrace their thought. It is not unreasonable that the cultures that
produced liberalism would embrace it successfully. Also, many of the successes attributed to
liberal democracy were recognized as such only because of the values already present in the
modern liberal democracies. This is not to deny the positive advancement in societies that were
not originally part of the culture of liberalism, such as India, Japan, Brazil, China, and others.
But to think that it was the influence of liberal democracy alone is shortsighted. It could be
argued that these nations embraced liberal democracy (or are currently in the process of doing
so) for purely economic reasons. The industrial growth that they experienced called for a system
better equipped to deal with the demands of capitalism, and no political ideal has been closer tied
to capitalism than liberal democracy.

The unfortunate side-effect of these successes is the idea that liberal democracy can cure all
societal ills. Neville argues that it is the liberal idea of an inertial will and power metaphor that
causes liberal democracies to view their systems as a gift that can be given to others: "Shaped by
the metaphor of power, the apparent goal of justice is to give power to the relatively
disempowered to seek their own interest, whatever that might be. This... abjures any attempt to
articulate a true or valid interest for people, save those that are instrumental for exercising power."  

This is the mentality at work when it is suggested that democracy is what is needed to solve centuries of oppression. Clearly, liberal democracy is important to liberalism and capitalism, but to suggest that it is a good in and of itself is "sheer delusion."  

2. Global Organic Relationships

Lacking a means to measure the quality of a social organism based upon egalitarianism, we are faced with the same dilemma. There appears to be real injustice and oppression in the world, but how can an idea of universal organic democracy account for this? What has been implicit in the preceding paragraphs is the sense of globalism. Liberal democracies would not feel obliged to spread their system throughout the world unless they saw the world as somehow affecting them. However, liberal democracy views other states in the same way it views individuals: isolated and atomic. Without going into the complexities of international relations, it is sufficient to say that liberalism is inadequate here as well. States are not the only forces acting internationally. Increasingly, individuals, groups, and other non-state entities are international actors, and this calls for a further examination of the organism. In terms of organic democracy, the organism in question is usually the democratic state, or, in our discussion, any state. However, there are social connections that extend beyond the boundaries of the state. It is easy to see how an individual is in many ways responsible to the state to which he or she belongs, both in liberalism and as a part of an organism. But what relation does a citizen of one state have to a citizen or government of another state?

Just as many majorities and dissensions can be formed in, over, and around each other as in our previous examples of the civil rights movement, so can many organisms exist in complex

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15 Neville, 188.
16 Ibid.
layers of relationships. Social groups operating as organic socialities can be formed based on race, class, religion, ethnicity, age, political affiliation, or any number of social categories that have a practical effect on human interaction. As the availability of communication increases, so does the ease of interaction, and this increased interaction allows people to come together to form these groups regardless of their national identity. This results in individuals belonging to many different organic socialities, and the socialities themselves interact because the influence they have on their members is always in flux. In other words, we are rapidly approaching a time of truly global interaction, in which all individuals and groups are able to interact with each other. Because of this, it is not difficult to imagine a global organism that encompasses all individuals and more local organisms. This is more than David Weissman's "highest-order system of systems,"¹⁷ because, like Dewey demonstrated, it is fully organic. Individuals, whether they be individual persons or governments, are localized manifestations of the whole. This realization sheds new light on the problem of oppression.

3. Organic Obligations

The organic democracy that we now assert is global is not merely a democracy of empowerment, as liberalism views the term. It is a democracy of obligation. If there is a disease in an organism, it negatively affects the whole. All parts have a stake in the well-being of the whole and an obligation to do something about it. It is not a necessity that such things as oppression, genocide, and other large-scale social "diseases" are evil, but it is the generally held opinion that they are. Because of this, the majority is obligated by the principles of organic democracy to quell these dissenting diseases when they occur. It is a dual obligation. The first part comes from the principles of democracy, as established in our discussion of dissent. The

majority, those who direct the will of the organism, are, by definition, opposed to those who dissent. Secondly, the principle of organism obligates them to cure the organism of the disease, because to do so is to cure the self. This dual obligation results in an imperative for all organisms, local and global, to attempt to rid themselves of those influences they consider harmful.

At first, this imperative may seem troublesome and even dangerous. It likely brings to mind images of Nazi Germany and the attempted eradication of Jews and other minorities, or the forced migration of the Native Americans, or any other of the far too numerous historical examples of oppression. It is the case that this imperative was at work in these examples. Those with the majority of power tried their best to rid themselves of the minority, both because of the dynamics of organic democracy itself and because the majority viewed the minority as harmful. However, it is also the case that the same imperative is at work when we look back upon those events today and view them as horrible atrocities. The near universal condemnation of the Holocaust is an example of a global majority agreeing that such a thing is harmful to the global organism and should be eradicated at all costs. In cases such as these, organic democracy provides a global obligation to combat genocide.

4. Evolutionary Democracy

However, this democracy is not without some sense of empowerment. The previous notion brings to mind, once again, the problem of majority tyranny. And since we are concerned with a majority of power or influence, not a numerical majority, it seems perhaps even more dangerous to invest such power in it. But this is not the case. Beyond what Dewey mentioned about the role of the minority in the legitimacy of the majority (and this applies even when not speaking of numerical calculations), the majority that is present in a global organism is always seeking the
best. That is because, this organism, above all others, is not tied to specific interests, locality, or history other than that of humanity. The character of the majority is always changing, always being modified by dissenters who present a viable alternative, or absorbing those who dissent for their own gain. It is also a vague majority; made up of all the myriad interests of humanity, it can only exert power over those issues that seem the most universal. A majority cannot form over anything more specific, but this does not mean democracy is not at work at all levels. Factions are always forming and dying, shrinking and expanding, following the whims of personal opinion and social interaction. What these individuals want, above all else, is the good. This may be the good for them, or for what they believe is their community; but it is the good nonetheless. The search for the good is informed by the constant discourse of social interaction and organic democracy.

Like evolution in the biological world, social organisms are engaged in a process of natural selection. They flourish or die based upon their success at maintaining a majority of power through the allegiance of their constituent parts. This means that success, or the good, is self-defined by the majority, and it is this definition that helps hold the organism together. Common personal opinions on the nature of the good in a particular area, be it race relations, foreign policy, or any other social issue, is what creates the organism by distinguishing it from other organisms. If the organism is not successful at achieving what has been defined as the good, or the constituents of the organism are persuaded to another definition of the good, then that organism has progressed in an evolutionary way. We can again look at the Holocaust in Nazi Germany and the systematic oppression of African-Americans throughout much of American history as examples of evolutionary progress. Although both of these examples were carried out because those in the majority thought they were for the best, they were eventually persuaded (by
very different means) that those instances of genocide and oppression were, in fact, bad.

Furthermore, the horrific nature of the Holocaust is so powerful that it will likely continue to influence Germans, Europeans, and most of the world that such a thing is most definitely not good. Although genocide unfortunately still occurs, various local social organisms as well as the global social organism have progressed in an evolutionary way by learning from the mistakes of the past. Not all evolutionary steps turn out to be positive, but taken has a whole, evolutionary social progression cannot be anything but progression towards the good.

The vagueness of the majority, as well as the dependence on varied interests to add variety and legitimacy to the ongoing discourse, makes a place for cultural difference. However, it is not certain that this difference will always be maintained. It could happen, as many have suggested, that the globalization of society will lead to conformity. In the context of our discussion, this means that the global organism will find more and more issues on which a majority can be formed, and less instances of dissent against it. This, by itself, could be bad; it would limit the input to the discourse. But this could not happen overnight. Conformity on this scale could only come after ages of truly global interaction. What this means is that if it did happen, then it would only happen because the dissenting minorities allow it to happen, if they are persuaded to the other side. Increasing conformity is the result of one ideal being held up to be better than others and the rest agreeing. This is not a naive assumption that people will not be forced into conforming, but it is based upon a more long-term outlook. This outlook, informed by history, shows that although conformity may be forced at times, if the standard to which one conforms is qualitatively worse, then it will not effectively quell dissent against it. Additionally, it might be the case that conformity is the ultimate goal of the global organism. A universally accepted moral code would have the same strength, in its practical effects, of a code handed
down by the divine in sight of all.\textsuperscript{18} If it can be said, and I think it can, that preservation of human life (in the general sense) is a globally accepted value, then it has the strength of a universal. If global majorities can be formed on more issues, then they will gain this strength as well.

Conclusion: A Democracy of Trial and Error

The great mass of humans, throughout history, have been participating in a democracy of trial and error, continually supporting what works and dissenting against what does not. This is not to say that today is necessarily better than yesterday; whatever happened today may be rejected tomorrow. But this does suggest that somewhere over the thousands of years of human history, things have gotten better in real and meaningful ways. The world today has its share of suffering, but it also has ample resources to eliminate that suffering. The latter was not always the case. What is now needed is further progress in the sense of the relationships - political, personal, and organic - that individuals feel that they have with each other. This will invigorate a new sense of social and global responsibility, not because it calls for new codes of morality, but because it redefines to whom one is responsible.

\textsuperscript{18} Weissman, 167-168.
Bibliography


