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Democratic Deliberation and Moral Awareness

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Abstract

Much of the debate between theorists of deliberative democracy has centered on forms of discourse and the role that reason should play. But philosophers have been unable to explain the transformative power attributed to deliberation. I argue that we ought to look to recent studies of moral psychology, which illuminate the moralizing mechanisms brought into play by deliberation. In deliberations by small groups empathic cues, as well as direct and semantically mediated associations between the social situations of oneself and others, produce moral cognition, and broaden awareness of morally salient features of the policies and issues under discussion. Narrations in diverse groups can enhance moral perception, cue empathic reactions, and provide powerful tools for organizing moral knowledge, in contrast to more confrontational forms of discourse, such as direct argumentation. The moral psychology at work in diverse and small groups of deliberators suggests that the institutionalization of deliberative forums could produce a more representative government and achieve morally better politics and policies.

DEMOCRATIC DELIBERATION AND MORAL AWARENESS [1] The last few decades have seen a dramatic rise in philosophical dissatisfaction with the ways in which democratic governance has been both conceived and practiced. In searching for stronger and deeper forms of democracy, hopes have centered on the promise of deliberative or discursive democracy. Among philosophers, discussion has largely focused on what styles of discourse are best suited for effective deliberation.

Nearly all admit the importance of appeals to reason, but some have cast a suspicious eye on the ideological implications of idealizing rational discourse. They have pressed the case for discursive pluralism and the contributions of rhetoric, narration, and expressions of emotion. I will argue that behind these disagreements lie questions of moral psychology. By moving beyond the focus on forms of discourse to the principles that underlie moral perception and judgment, we can begin to see how deliberative forums might lead to moral improvement of the participants and become a vehicle for achieving morally better politics and policies.

The vast literature on deliberative democracy can be roughly divided into three categories. Some philosophers, such as Habermas (1989 and 1996), Gutmann and Thompson (1996 and 2004), and Benhabib (1996a and 1996b) have largely ignored problems of institutionalization and have developed theories of the epistemology and moral underpinnings of deliberation under idealized conditions. They aim to determine what fundamental principles are necessary for democratic dialogue and judgment to emerge. However, such idealized accounts have little to offer in the way of institutional reform.

Some political scientists have searched for ways of approximating idealized accounts of democratic deliberation within existing political systems on a grand scale. Kevin O'Leary (2006) and Benjamin Barber (1984), for example, have proposed reforms that seem to exceed the boundaries of political realism because of problems of scale. And political structures already in place have inertia born of their slow evolution over many years and their deep roots in common law, constitutional constraints, judicial decisions, legislative history, and the like.

Perhaps this is why there has been such interest by a third group of philosophers and political scientists—James S. Fishkin (1995; Fishkin and Luskin 2000), Graham Smith, (2000; 2003; Smith and Wales 2000) John Gastil

(2000), and many others—in a more modest, but still promising, approach through such devices as consensus conferences, citizen panels and juries, and deliberative polls,[2] which I will refer to collectively as *deliberative forums*.

Deliberative forums are attempts to create collaborations between citizens and experts. The role of experts is limited to participation as organizers and facilitators of the forums, and as expert witnesses. Beyond this, forums can take a vast variety of forms. There is currently a great deal of experimentation going on to understand and refine them, an effort that will determine what roles they might play a role in our political system.[3]

I will focus on forums that recruit small, demographically representative groups of citizens to engage in face-to-face deliberation about policy. These are to be contrasted with the usual methods of involving citizens, such as public hearings, advisory boards, commissions, and task forces, which usually involve citizens with particular interest or expertise in a specific area of policy, do not provide policy makers with views and attitudes representative of the general public, and are easily construed as further instances of the domination of special interests in politics (Weeks 2000, p. 361). Public hearings, a common method of involving citizens, are often unproductive and unsatisfying because of their adversarial character (Fiorina 1999).

My primary focus will be upon what moral psychology can contribute to deliberation, and the potential contribution of deliberation to the moral character of citizens and the health of a democracy. I will draw upon research in neuroscience and developmental psychology (some of which was directly inspired by the moral psychologies of David Hume and Adam Smith[4]), along with experiments in ethics and small-group deliberation, for their insights into moral perception and judgment.

I will suggest that these insights have the potential to improve the moral quality of democratic deliberation by providing a better understanding of the roles of emotion, empathic response, diversity within the deliberative body, and

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[2] For a survey and typology of these various practices, see Rowe and Frewer 2000, Fiorino 1990, Fung 2003, and Gastil and Levine 2005. [3] For a survey of this research and the directions it is taking, see Gastil and Levine 2005 and Smith 2003, Chapter 4. [4] For example, on Hume's influence on Jean Decity's research (e.g. Decety and Jackson 2006), see Gibson 2006. For other indications of the influence of Smith and Hume on contemporary research see Hoffman 2000, 2, 52-53, 96, 123, 245-46; Sinnott-Armstrong 2008a, 13, 34, 256, 421, 436; Sinnott-Armstrong 2008b, 115, 137, 185, 188, 189, 214, 220; Sinnott-Armstrong 2008c, 1, 13, 41, 72, 228, 231, 237, 246-47, 260, 274, 283, 307, 372, 374, 376.

narration. I will advance the position that participation in deliberative forums of relatively small numbers of demographically representative citizens can contribute to improved political representation.

When Argument, Rhetoric, Testimony, and Expressions of Emotion Do Not Work

Of the highly theoretical accounts of democratic deliberation, Jon Elster observes that "all agree that it includes decision making by means of arguments offered by and to participants who are committed to the values of rationality and impartiality" (1998, p. 8). While not all deliberative theorists agree with this emphasis upon reason, most do.[5] Theorists and social scientists inspired by this model (but not captured by it) have suggested that it could produce changes in the participants themselves – changes that would include increased mutual respect, self-understanding and capacity for rational decision-making, solidarity, faith in the democratic process, egalitarianism, and recognition that citizens aremutually dependent upon each other in spite of their differences.[6] There is some empirical evidence that deliberation can, indeed, produce some of these results (Gastil et al. 2002, Fishkin 2009). But I contend that the primary result may be an increase in moral awareness, which cannot be explained by the mere exchange of impartial arguments.

Feminists have been especially concerned that the rationalist model of deliberation ignores and reinstates deeply pervasive inequalities of power and privilege. One of the first to raise this criticism was Lynn Sanders (1997), who argued that adopting the norm of impartial reason has ideological effects and marginalizes the voices of women, the poor, and those who lack formal training in argumentation. Feminists have advanced the case that emotion should be recognized as an important element in deliberation (Young 1996, pp. 129–32; 2000, pp. 57–77; Hall 2007; See also de Sousa 2001). They often stress the importance of narration, because it encourages relational thinking by making it possible to discover shared values and experiences, and fosters mutual respect and a sense of community.[7]

Some of the most prominent theorists, such as Amy Gutmann, and Dennis Thompson (1996, pp, 132-360), have responded to this kind of criticism in their more recent accounts by allowing a wider range of discourses, such as

[5] For example, Habermas 1998 Cohen1997, Bohman 1990; Farrell 1993; Myerson 1994; Nino 1996; Rowland 1990; Schrag 1992; Spragens 1990; Willard 1989; Zarefsky 1992.[6] For example, Gutmann and Thompson 1996; Chambers 1996; Fishkin 1995; Yankelovich 1991; Mendelberg 2002.[7] For example, Young 1996, Foss and Griffin 1995; Schiffrin 1985; Somers 1994.

story-telling, rhetoric, and personal testimony. But there is, as yet, no model of the deliberative process that can explain why even discursively pluralistic deliberation should produce profound moral transformations of the kinds claimed by deliberative democrats.

In our current system much of the deliberation open to citizens takes the form of public hearings, in which the participants have a clear stake and are defending their interests. Fung (2003, p .345) has called these "hot" deliberations. The story I am about to tell illustrates how poorly dominant forms of public participation serve the public.

The village of Spring Valley lies, as its name suggests, in a valley, next to the Little Miami,a State and National Scenic River. Next to the river and the village are farmlands and forests. Nearby two rare and protected ecosystems are connected by one of the most popular and beautiful bicycle trails in the state, which runs through the village. The village itself is like a scene from the past. Its population is far from wealthy, but its entire main street has been placed on the National Registry of Historic Places because of its architectural and historic richness.

In the year 2000, Martin Marietta applied for a permit to mine gravel and sand on a farm adjacent to the Little Miami, a stone's throw away from the village and the bike trail. The farm was located in the Township of Spring Valley. From April to June there were four public hearings attended by as many as three hundred people each time—such a large crowd that the only place capacious enough to seat them all was the garage in which the township parks its fire trucks and emergency vehicles.

A group of citizens had formed a non-profit organization, Concerned Citizens of Spring Valley, to oppose Martin Marietta's application. They hired a lawyer and recruited residents of the township and village to conduct research and offer testimony in meetings of the Board of Zoning Appeals, whose five members sat behind a row of tables. None of the Board lived anywhere near where the mining would take place.

Martin Marietta presented a study by an acoustical engineer, which purported to show that the residents would not even hear the mine's operations (despite the fact that the operations of another of its mines nearby could be heard for miles). A realtor assured the audience that there would be no decline in property values, and that values might even go up, since having a mine nearby might attract wildlife and would be like a park. A photograph of a building on a

previously mined site was shown, with the promise of complete restoration once the mining had ceased. And so on.

Concerned Citizens presented letters from residents near another mine owned by Martin Marietta, who stated that they had been forced by the noise and dust to abandon any outdoor leisure. Citizens pointed out that silica dust from mining had been declared a known carcinogen by the EPA. Those who lived near the proposed mine gave personal testimony of the money, time, and effort they had put into their homes, which they argued would now become devalued. They stressed the importance of preserving the idyllic beauty of the area and the economic benefits of the popular bike trail and scenic river. They showed that a mine at this site was inconsistent with the county's land use plan. Only two citizens spoke in favor of the mine—one an excavator, who said that the county needed all the gravel it could get, and the other a non-resident who was a friend of the operators of the existing mine.

At this meeting citizens offered rational arguments, testimony, and narratives. In addition, there was much expression of emotion. How did the Board of Zoning Appeals respond? Apart from the chair, who conducted the hearing, the members of the Board listened in complete silence through many hours of hearings.[8] In the end they approved Martin Marietta's permit by a vote of three to two.

One can only speculate on their motives and reactions, but in a small rural township, word gets around, and that word was that the Board resented the pressure of citizens and apparently regarded the opponents who testified as uppity. They resented the attempts at argument, the personal stories, the expressions of emotion, regarding them as forms of coercion and challenges to their authority.

What can we learn from this story? Why did the majority of the members of the Board not take the citizens' concerns more seriously into account? The setting was quasi-judicial—the board sat like judges and the sessions proceeded as if this were a case of prosecution and defense. There was a clear inequality of status between Martin Marietta's staff of professionals and the members of the Board authorized to make a decision on the one hand, and citizens on the other. The chairman of the Board frequently told citizens that, because they lacked professional credentials, their claims did not provide a valid basis for a decision.

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[8] Karpowitz and Frost 2007, pp. 12, 21-2 report that such silence among officials is common at public hearings and sometimes even mandated by the hearing's rules.

In addition, the arguments, rhetoric, and testimony offered by citizens created a backlash of resentment among the members of the board.

I propose that all these factors contributed to blocking an empathic and sympathetic response from the board and provoked a decision that not only failed the test of responding to the force of the better argument but was also morally defective in the emotional process that produced it. This sort of response to the concerns and needs of citizens occurs in many dimensions of our political system. It is a systemic problem. The many experiments in deliberation that are now being conducted are an attempt to remedy this problem. But that remedy requires a deeper understanding of morally effective deliberation and how deliberative forums might be used to strengthen democratic representation and improve policy.

The Psychology of Deliberation
David Hume and Adam Smith (his disciple), contemporary developmental psychologists who follow in their footsteps, and experimental ethicists (who use empirical methods for developing and refining ethical theories), furnish insights that might improve the moral quality of deliberation. Their studies of moral psychology reveal processes that might be put into play in deliberative forums in ways that accelerate, reinforce, and activate the elements of moral cognition and sharpen moral perception. These studies suggest that effective deliberation requires much more than rational discourse. It requires attention to how empathic cues are activated and communicated and the ways in which associations between the social situations of oneself and others produce moral cognition, and broaden awareness of morally salient features of the policies and issues under discussion (Hoffmann 2000. pp. 48ff.).

Incorporating insights from these studies with on-going experiments in deliberative forums could provide opportunities for the moral development of the citizenry and improved democratic representation. Properly conducted, they might tell us what a wide spectrum of citizens would choose if they were not only informed about the issues, but were directly engaged in deliberation under conditions which enhanced their moral perceptions, and required distinctively moral responses to the issues at hand.

Careful attention to documenting and publicizing such deliberations could provide other citizens a provocative stimulus to moral reflection on policy and politics by showing them how others like themselves responded to participative citizenship, and could be designed to maximize influence on politicians and policy-makers. Institutionalizing such forums, making them

regular occurrences to which citizens were invited, could revitalize our democracy and raise the level of discourse and moral reflection upon policy.

Deliberative democrats, both theorists and practitioners, claim that deliberation produces some rather stunning transformations in its participants. While theorists occasionally give lip service to moral psychology by recognizing that some moral mechanisms, such as empathy, play important roles, their most frequent emphasis is upon rational discourse. But a great deal of recent empirical research on moral psychology suggests that we often do not know why we make the moral judgments and choices that we do, that they are frequently motivated by emotions, and that many justifications of our moral choices are *post hoc* rationalizations.[9] This research shows that moral perception and judgment are driven by a variety of extremely complex factors and cannot be reduced to impartial assessments of arguments or abstract reasoning.

In the current psychological literature there has been increasing attention to the cognitive functions and neurological basis of empathy. It is defined by Decety and Jackson as

> the capacity to understand and respond to the unique affective experiences of another person. At an experiential level of description, this psychological construct denotes a sense of similarity between one's own feelings and those expressed by another person. At a basic level of description, empathy can be conceived of as an interaction between any two individuals, with one experiencing and sharing the feeling of the other (Decety and Jackson 2006, p. 54).

This is essentially the activity of the mind described by David Hume as a sympathetic response.

Hume's account of moral development gives a central place to sympathy, or what we would today call empathy, which is grounded on fundamental similarities between oneself and others. In his account, when one observes another experiencing pain or even pleasure, the mind produces an "impression" or experience of a similar thing within oneself ([1739-40] 1978, pp. 318-320). Because of this reactivity, Hume proposes that we all share, at least to some small degree, a benevolent disposition to other humans.

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[9] For a survey of the recent empirical literature, see Greene 2008, pp. 35-80; 2008, pp. 73-120; and Haidt 2001.

Even though this disposition might not provide a sufficient motivation to act against our own best interest, it still has some influence on our moral assessments in moments of calm reflection. This influence, Hume argues, is enough to produce a tendency, when all things are equal, to approve of those actions, policies, and institutions which benefit humanity, and to disapprove of those with a contrary effect ([1777] 1975, p. 271). He considers this tendency moral, not simply psychological (Blum 1982; Baeir 1987; Krause 2008, pp. 77110).

Hume goes on to describe a variety of other processes that build upon empathy to produce moral growth: the need to speak from a common point of view in order to motivate others to cooperate in one's projects, the "love of fame," and the fear that others will morally disapprove of one's character.

Moral language—the language of oughts—arises in Hume's view from the need to speak from a "common point of view" in order to motivate cooperation. If I wish to enlist you on my side, you will not be persuaded if I speak only of my own personal goals and grievances. But if I appeal to those benevolent feelings towards humanity that guide your thinking in moments of disinterested meditation, you may listen and approve. If I speak of the need to end oppression of the weak and helpless or stop poisons from being released into the environment and passing into the bodies of our children, then your "sympathy" for humanity might bring you to my side. Appeals to the common sentiments produced by "sympathy" are persuasive and the pervasiveness of appeals to shared concerns add force to moral language which then often overpowers our private concerns ([1777] 1975, pp. 273-276).

Sympathy produces two other motives that exercise a moralizing force— "the love of fame" and hatred of shame. We care what others think of us, because if they disapprove or approve of our character and actions, we sympathetically respond to ourselves as they do, feeling shame when they disapprove and pride when we see them approving. Accordingly we make a practice of considering how we appear to others and how they evaluate our attitudes and practices (276). These observations of Hume's might now seem so commonplace and obvious that we underestimate their force. But recent research has dramatically established the motivational power of empathic sensitivity to others and to the way others regard us.

Much recent research has inquired into the role of empathy in moral cognition, perception, and growth. Some researchers have developed the *empathy-altruism hypothesis*, according to which empathy and altruistic

motivation are triggered by witnessing suffering (Batson 1987; Hoffman 1982). Experiments have confirmed this hypothesis by establishing that subjects who watch a woman receive a simulated electrical shock frequently volunteer to take her place rather than take the option of leaving (Batson, et al. 1983; Haidt 2001, pp. 824-25).

The psychologist Martin Hoffman has devoted his career to investigating the relationships between empathy and moral sensitivity. He distinguishes two general classes of empathic arousal: the "preverbal, automatic, and essentially involuntary," and two "higher-order cognitive modes." One cognitive mode depends upon "semantic processing of information from or about the victim," the other on imaginatively placing oneself in the situation of another. The higher modes broaden the scope of concern and enable one to empathize with those who are not present (2000, p. 5).

In Hoffman's account, empathy with a victim of injustice brings a dual awareness of both one's own empathic distress and an associated moral principle, which produces what he calls a "hot" or intrinsically motivating cognition. When the moral principle comes into play, whether in a personal encounter or in abstract consideration, the empathic effect is again aroused, so that considerations of justice contain both a semantic or "principle-driven" component and a stimulus to concern and action (p. 14).[10]

Hoffman both posits a relationship between empathy and abstract ethical principles, and gives an extended analysis, and reinterpretation, of John Rawls' account of justice as fairness. As is well known, Rawls introduced a famous thought experiment, his hypothetical "original position" in which self-interested and rational persons must select principles of justice from behind a "veil of ignorance" of what position they will have when they enter life. Rawls (1971, p. 75) excludes empathic and sympathetic motivations, contending that the participants would adopt principles that ensure their future well being, regardless of their future position, out of rational self-interest.

Hoffman (2000, pp. 235-37) responds that in practice any motivation to adopt such abstract moral principles must derive from empathy, including empathic responses to victims and empathic anger at social injustice, which *constrains* self-interest. A group of individuals following Rawls' instructions will imagine those they know, or have heard of, who suffer in the lowest positions of a radically unequal society. Empathic distress at their plights will

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[10] The notion of a "hot cognition" bears a striking resemblance to Hume's "calm passions" ([1739-40] 1978, pp. 417, 419, 583-587).

provide prosocial motivation, so that Rawls' principles will have weight in life not only because they are clearly fair but because they are associated with empathic effects. They will be "hot cognitions."[11]

There is wide consensus among neuro-scientists that, consistent with Hume's account of sympathy, empathy includes 1) affective responses to other persons, which often involve sharing that person's emotional condition, 2) the mental capacity to adopt the perspective of others, and 3) the regulation of the emotions.[12] Empathic reactions can be triggered by the neurologically based tendency to mimic the emotions of others or by the imaginative effort to construct within oneself the thinking and feeling of another, while the affective response is so regulated that one does not confuse one's own and the other's emotions and feelings.

Experiments in functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI)[13] have revealed that when subjects are asked to imitate facial expressions characteristic of specific emotions, there is an increase in the neural activity in the regions of the brain associated with those emotions. Other experiments with fMRI have shown that observing pain in others activates regions of the brain "implicated in processing the affective and motivational aspects of one's own pain, with the level of activity correlated with the degree of pain attributed." These studies suggest that the empathic response might be built into the structure of the brain—that it is "hard-wired."

Similar studies indicate that giving subjects descriptions of persons in painful, distressing, or emotionally fraught situations, and asking them to imagine themselves in the situation of those persons, increases activity in regions of the brain implicated in the processing of one's own pain and emotions. At the same time, activity in non-overlapping regions of the brain suggest that there is a neurological basis for sharing the pain and feelings of others, while being able to differentiate them from one's own (Decety and Jackson 2006, pp. 54-56).[14] Based on such studies, Decety and Jackson conclude,

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[11] Similar criticisms of Rawls can be found in Krause 2008; pp. 27-47, 111-141; and Okin 1989, pp. 101-09. [12] Recent work, however, suggests somewhat different effects of each of these components and that there are a variety of ways of taking perspectives that yield different results (Batson 2009, Galinsky et al. 2005. [13] For a further discussion of these experiments, see Moll, et al., pp. 4ff. [14] Some evidence suggests that empathic response has a biological basis in mirror neurons which respond to displays of emotions by creating corresponding emotions in the observer (Prinz 2008,

p. 431).

> There is strong evidence that, in the domain of emotion processing and empathic understanding, people use the same neural circuits for themselves and for others. These circuits provide a functional bridge between first-person and third-person information, which paves the way for intersubjective transactions between self and others. These circuits can also be activated when one adopts the perspective of the other. However, were this bridging between self and other absolute, experiencing another's distress state as one's own experience could lead to empathic over arousal, in which the focus would then become one's own feelings of stress rather than the other's need. Self agency and emotion-regulatory mechanisms thus play a crucial role in maintaining a boundary between self and other (p. 57).

This research, which was directly inspired by the theories of Hume and Adam Smith, supports their view of the moralizing influence of empathy or, in their parlance, "sympathy."

The power of empathic sensitivity to affect our self-appraisals, described in Hume's account of the "love of fame," is also suggested by research in group therapy of violent juvenile offenders, which involve them in reenacting their crimes. In one case, a juvenile had kidnapped and raped a two-year-old girl, had previously shown no remorse, been persistently unrepentant, and responded with a great deal of arrogance to those who suggested that he ought to feel shame for his actions. When reenacting the crime with a doll in group therapy, he was stunned by the shocked, horrified, and disgusted reaction of his group of fellow criminals, as well as the group's leader. This led to his feeling remorse and shame for the first time in a later judicial hearing.[15]

The Humean account of moral development and motivation has received recent support from studies of the brain. Some have suggested that the responses provoked by our moral sentiments—moral "intuitions"—can be grouped into fundamental kinds of mental systems or "modules." These biologically evolved features of the brain, which are influenced by cultural evolution and the moral concepts we explicitly discuss, are hypothesized to include, among other things, tendencies to avoid or alleviate harm, to prefer fair and reciprocal relationships, and to be sensitive to social status (something like Hume's "love of fame").[16] These biologically based tendencies might provide the basis for empathic

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[15] Agee 1979, pp. 292-293, reported in Gibbs 2003, pp. 190-191. [16] For an elegant summary of this research and these theories, see Appiah 2008, pp. 126-145.

sensitivity that takes us beyond mere self-concern and produces growth in moral awareness.

Diversity, Deliberation, and Moral Perception
These same tendencies that lead to moral growth may be brought into play in deliberative forums. Clearly language and reasoning have a role, but their efficacy is often determined by empathic responses to others, which extend beyond reasoning. I am reluctant to call these emotive responses non-cognitive, as many do, because on Hume's account they are the foundations of moral cognition. If that is the case, then *moral* deliberation involves more than the giving of arguments and the movement towards impartial consideration. It requires more than the deployment of refined moral concepts. It requires social interaction in which we react to the responses of others, share experiences, tell our stories, and engage in imaginative activity, as well as considering facts and the likely consequences of decisions about policy.

In a deliberative forum empathic cues, both direct and mediated by language, are likely to create both positive and negative associations between oneself and others. Stories, as well as objective facts, potentially provoke imaginative consideration of what it would be like to be those who suffer or are made happier under the conditions created by each policy under consideration. One will be forced, as Hume suggests, to consider one's views in the light of others' reactions.

In seeking to enlist others to one's own point of view, one will have to appeal, not to purely self-interested reasons, but to the distinctively moral sentiments one shares in common with others. In other words, all the processes that lead to moral growth, as a child is socialized and develops a moral conscience, will be present. Stories can also enlist the emotions in valorizing the in-group and demonizing the outgroup. I will return to this point in the conclusion. The point here is not that the use of emotion in deliberation inevitably produces moral growth but instead that it is an important, perhaps even necessary, component in positive moral growth.

Many deliberative democrats emphasize not merely reason, but what they call "public reason." By this they mean that one must not only justify one's claims, but also justify them with reasons that can be embraced by all.[17] But, as Gaus (1997, pp. 215-219) points out, there is no real consensus on what

[17] For example, Postema 1995, p. 70; Cohen 1997, p. 68; Rawls 1997, pp. 93-99.

constitutes a reasonable belief, or public or political reason, nor can these notions be coherently explicated.

As pointed out earlier, feminists have been concerned that these norms of reason suppress communicative freedom and participation by all (Rättilä 2000, p. 45; Fraser 1992, Young 1996). They have consistently argued for allowing a variety of forms of communication. For example, Iris Marion Young writes,

> [T]he distinction between public and private as it appears in modern political theory expresses a will for homogeneity that necessitates the exclusion of many persons and groups…. In conformity with the modern idea of normative reason, the idea of the public in modern political theory and practice designates a sphere of human existence in which the citizens express their rationality and universality, abstracted from their particular situations and need, and opposed to feeling…. [W]e need to transform the distinction between public and private to one that does not correlate with an opposition between reason and affectivity and desire, or universal and particular (Young 1987, p. 73).

In order to create such a transformation, Young develops the notion of social perspectives and how differences among them provide deliberative resources.

In order to provide an account of difference that does not reduce to essentialist claims about women's perspectives or perspectives determined by class or race, she defines a social group as "a collection of persons differentiated from others by cultural forms, practices, special needs or capacities, structures of power or prestige." These groups emerge "from the way people encounter one another as different in form of life or association, even if they regard each other as belonging to the same society" (Young 1997, p. 389). She distinguishes her notion of a social perspective from a deterministic or essentialist account of identity:

> Social processes and interactions position individual subjects in prior structures, and this positioning conditions who one is. But positioning neither determines nor defines individual identity. Individuals are agents: we constitute our own identities, and each person's identity is unique. We do not choose the conditions under which we form our identities, and we have no choice but to become ourselves under the conditions that position us in determinate relations to others (p. 392).

Differing structural positions offer important resources for deliberation because they offer different perspectives on, and understandings of, social problems and the consequences of unequal relations of power.

A variety of social perspectives provides more ways of being aware of, and responsive to, the particularities of social life. In the best deliberative conditions, differing social perspectives do not prevent participants from understanding one another, but such understanding requires effort. Being confronted by a diversity of perspectives empowers deliberators to take a more reflective and often more emotionally encompassing stance. The diversity provides the deliberators with a variety of ways of distancing themselves from their own points of view and calls forth effort to create bridges between their perspectives (pp. 394-395, 398).

Young's account is consistent with Jean Piaget's explanation of a distinctive form of knowledge produced by ongoing mental coordination between two or more persons. An effect produced by this interaction is *decentration*—movement away from "narrow, imbalanced, and biased attentions (centrations)." But mental coordination also produces special kinds of knowledge that cannot be taught, but only *constructed* through participation in the mutually coordinating activity itself. He considers moral reciprocity to be a concept that can only be arrived at in this way (Gibbs 2003, p. 32).

Piaget's insights have been extended by recent studies of how children come to understand a sort of conservation principle. Children presented with two identical glasses containing identical levels of water agree that both contain the same quantity of water. When water from one of these glasses is then poured into a third, narrower, glass, a typical preschool child concludes that the narrow glass contains more water, because the level of water in the third glass is higher. But some children focus on the narrowness of the third glass, and conclude that it contains less water.

The conflicting judgments are determined by what is perceptually salient to each child (p. 25). When two children, around six or seven years old, with such conflicting judgments and perceptions, are paired and asked to determine the respective quantities of water in the glasses, without being given the correct answer, the two children's judgments were wrong in a "mutually heuristic way." As they tried to resolve their differences, each child increased the salience of the feature neglected by the other, and together they constructed the right answer to the question (pp. 29-30).[18] Analogously, in a deliberative forum, exposure to a variety of social perspectives should increase sensitivity to the morally salient features of the subject under discussion.

[18] See also Page 2007.

As before, we can also derive insights from Hume's moral psychology. He posits a kind of ongoing internal dialectic in which we move back and forth between immediate empathic reactions and more distanced considerations to reach more general moral views. From our reactions to the suffering and happiness of those with whom we have direct interaction as we move through life, and from the imaginative consideration of history and social facts, our judgment can gain the capacity to balance and correct our differing emotional responses. But the more our circle of associates is restricted to a common social perspective, the more impoverished our pool of empathic responses is likely to be, and our general views are proportionately less informed and more imperfect (Hume [1777] 1975, pp. 227-228).

In addition, as David Ryfe points out, empirical research has shown that diversity is strongly correlated with an open, engaged, and reflective frame of mind, and with the satisfaction participants derive from deliberation (Ryfe 2005, pp. 55, 51-56). Ryfe discusses the manner in which deliberation activates psychological mechanisms that increase the capacity for moral reflection. Social psychologists have noted that in everyday life, we rely on established "scripts" rather than a full evaluation of all relevant information.

Scripts are shortcuts, habitual responses, or cognitive heuristics, which employ subsets of information to form judgments, while discarding all the rest. When we are jarred out of these scripts, we are disconcerted in ways that directly implicate emotions as part of the process of reflection, making us attend more carefully to our environment, assess new information, and explicitly consider what course of action we ought to pursue (p. 55). Exposure to unfamiliar social perspectives in deliberative forums can provoke just such reactions. It jolts participants in ways that might cause them to move away from unreflective beliefs and habits of thought to a critical awareness of the moral qualities of problems and policies.[19]

Narration and Deliberation

Little attention has been paid to the precise connection between empathy or sympathy and narration in deliberative forums. One exception to this is a little-remarked-upon essay by Kimberly Smith, "Storytelling, Sympathy and Moral Judgment in American Abolitionism." Most defenses of storytelling in deliberation emphasize that they can assist reason by motivating lines of inquiry,

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[19] See also Eliasoph 1998; Huckfeldt and Sprague 1995; Knok 1990; Krassa 1990; Leighley1990; McLeod, et. al. 1999; Moscovici 1976); Mutz 2002a and 2002b; Mutz and Martin, 2001;Nemeth 1986; Nemeth and Kwan 1985; Thiele 2006; and Turner 1991

but insist that the emotions elicited by stories can and ought to be rationally evaluated.[20]

But Smith argues that, historically, storytelling in the Abolition movement was seen as a *replacement* for rational discourse which could "improve public judgment in a way rational arguments *could not*" (Smith 1998, p. 357). The problem was not an absence of good arguments against slavery, but that the arguments were unmotivating, because advocates of slavery were, "in a disturbing way, unaware, curiously out of touch with their moral impulses" (p. 359). They lacked the capacity for sympathy or empathy.

The unreasonable assumption that slaves were not persons could certainly block empathic responsiveness, but what led slave-owners to adopt such unreasonable assumptions in the first place? The psychological mechanisms that affect moral perception were corrupted by education, upbringing, and the practice of slavery itself. Frederick Douglass' autobiography gives an example in the person of Mrs. Auld.

At the time of her marriage to a slave-holder, she "had never had a slave under her control previously," and was "a woman of the kindest heart and finest feelings." But slavery "soon proved its ability to divest her of these heavenly qualities. Under its influence, the tender heart became stone, and the lamb-like disposition soon gave way to one of tiger-like fierceness" (Douglass [1845] 2003), pp. 40, 43). Smith concludes that the main point, and "most significant for the politics of storytelling"

> was that slavery infects one's entire moral nature in such a way that neither sympathy nor reason can work properly. This is why it is so hard to disentangle slaveholders' bad reasoning from their lack of compassion—both are the result of the same deep moral corruption. They are, in short, symptoms, not causes (Smith 1998, p. 364).

The goal of narration is to entice the reader or listener into a new moral perspective by working upon the basis of moral judgment in imagination and the emotions so that reason and rational arguments may have some effect (pp. 356357).

The aim of deliberative forums, in short, is not only to evaluate arguments for and against specific policies, but to make sense of our social situation, to sort out the order and meaning of our varied experiences, and to

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[20] For example, Nussbaum 1990, pp. 4-8; Rorty 1989, pp. 141-188; Sanders 1997; and Gutmann and Thompson 1996, pp. 135-137.

discern our moral responsibilities within a complex cultural context and set of institutional relationships. Stories are well suited to such a task. They invite us to consider who we are and who we wish to be, both individually and collectively.

Appiah argues that the collective evaluation of narratives enables us to "coordinate our responses to the world" and to construct and maintain our relations with each other. Both telling stories and discussing moral concepts are activities which assist moral perception and condition our moral responses by making first one, and then another feature of a situation morally salient and placing it within a variety of contexts (Appiah 2008, pp. 158-159). Stories pose tentative evaluations, invite joint reflection, and also attempt to persuade.

By analyzing videotapes of five National Issues Forums, David Ryfe found that the deliberations were dominated by forms of storytelling. He emphasizes two conditions of a successful deliberation: that the participants must decide to hold themselves accountable and that the issues under discussion are morally significant. Participants construct motivations for critical reflection by telling stories that establish their moral relationship to the issues.

He also discovered that narrations provided resources for negotiating conflicting moral judgments and perceptions and for maintaining "civility and friendliness in their conversation." Instead of directly contradicting one another, participants would express initial agreement, and then tell a story that provided material for deeper reflection that implied disagreement (Ryfe 2006, p. 75-76; see also Polletta 2008 and 2006; Polletta and Lee 2006). Narration, in contrast to contests between arguments, maintains social solidarity throughout the deliberative process. It both puts moral emotions and psychological mechanisms into play and provides ways of avoiding blocks to empathic consideration of the experiences and points of view of others.

Participation and Representation
I have been arguing that deliberative forums can encourage moral growth in their participants and produce judgments about policies and problems that are based on broadened moral perception and deepened moral reflection. Deliberation has value precisely because it can be a process that explicitly promotes *moral* considerations of policy. At first consideration, it is not easy to see what functions such forums can play in our system of representative democracy.

Based upon the account I have given of the psychology of deliberation and the importance of diversity and narration, I will now focus on forums

composed of groups with two characteristics: they are small enough so that the members can get to know one another and exchange stories and experiences, and they are selected by stratified random sampling to ensure that a variety of social perspectives is represented. It would be necessary to have a variety of distinct small groups deliberating on a common topic to ensure an adequate cross-section of social perspectives, but I leave the details of how to achieve this, and how to meld together the results of these deliberations aside, as a problem to be worked out through analysis of the many deliberative structures currently being used and evaluated.

Certain problems arise in calibrating the political functions of any such forums. On some accounts, Deliberative Polls provide a measure of what citizens would choose, had they the time, information, and resources to make considered judgments (Fishkin 1995, p. 162). But in most Deliberative Polls, while participating citizens might make recommendations to public officials and the citizenry, their recommendations have no legally binding authority, nor could they without altering fundamental elements of our current political system (for the few examples in which authorities have declared themselves bound by Deliberative Polls, see Fishkin 2009).

Deliberative forums are not a form of direct democracy, but neither can they easily be construed as a form of representative democracy (see Warren 2009). A forum might approach what Pitkin calls "descriptive representation"— a group which "mirrors" the demographic constituents of a society, but political society will contain vastly more variations than can be represented in such a small body of citizens. And besides, all citizens do not have an opportunity to participate in forums. At best they have only some statistical probability of having such an opportunity (Smith 2003, p. 91; Stone 2007). Pitkin has analyzed other problems in descriptive notions of political representation (Pitkin 1967, pp. 60-91).[21]

In response to this problem, Mark Brown suggests that political representation is more complex than has usually been considered because it is mediated and constituted through a variety of social practices. Public opinion is often unformed or contradictory, so political representatives must "elicit, educate, anticipate and aggregate constituent interests in the process of representing them." This process in turn is mediated by technology, the kind

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[21] For further discussion of the problem of representation see Williams 1998, pp. 27-36, 80, 143-48, 176-81, 238-43. Mansbridge (1999) makes a qualified case for the importance of descriptive representation. For the uneasy relationship between representation and deliberation, see Phillips 1995, Chapter 3 and pp. 145ff.

and number of physical gathering places available, the amount of time representatives have free to travel and deliberate, and so on.

Hanna Pitkin famously argued that political representation contains five distinct elements: (1) some sort of formal authorization of the representative, (2) formal accountability and duties of representatives and constituents, (3) expert knowledge, (4) the participation of the represented, and (5) some type of similarity between representatives and those they represent (Pitkin 1967, pp. 209-240). Brown suggests that none of these is logically exclusive of the others and that an institution can have representative functions without having every one. Whether an institution plays a role in representation is determined by its contributions to the whole democratic system (Brown 2006, pp. 206-207).

Brown suggests that deliberative forums can strengthen representative government by increasing accountability (see also Warren 2009). Following Gutmann and Thompson (1996, pp. 128-64), he suggests accountability be understood in terms of articulating, or "giving an account" of, the reasons behind political choices to those affected by them, including future generations, the disempowered, and non-citizens (Brown 2006, pp. 210-211). As Brown points out, providing resources for citizens to make sound political judgments and publicizing the results and processes of deliberative forums allows these bodies to hold politicians and policy makers more accountable. Such deliberative bodies have sometimes even been structured so that lawmakers or administrators pledge in advance either to adopt their recommendations or provide a public account of their reasons for failing to do so (Brown 2006, p. 211). If this more binding relationship could be achieved more broadly, or a way found to institutionalize such obligations for policy-makers, it would probably greatly increase the responsiveness and accountability of government to citizens.

Deliberative forums also play a role, important to democracy, by providing demonstrations of the competence of ordinary persons. In many arenas, such as environmental policy, citizens do not have much influence, because the subject lies so firmly in the hands of scientific experts (at least when their decisions are not overridden by presidential directives and political appointees or subverted by corporations[22]). Citizens, however, can develop insights and knowledge that are importantly complementary to professional expertise.[23] Citizens, who are now disaffected from the political process in large numbers, might be encouraged to participate by showing that they are able to

[22] E.g., Mooney 2005) and Michaels 2008). [23] For a series of case studies which demonstrate this point, and analyze its implications, see Corburn 2005. See also Dahl [After the Revolution]

bring substantive knowledge to bear on political choices and that their voices can be heard. This seems to be the case with those who participate in deliberative forums, who often report an increased commitment to involvement in the political process.[24] Well-publicized forums, designed so that their recommendations must be confronted by lawmakers, could do much to increase political participation in other citizens as well.

Conclusion

I do not wish to overstate the case for the positive moral effects of democratic deliberation. Current empirical studies of deliberation are limited in what they tell us about what fosters good deliberation. When participants have much to gain or lose and when the decisions are binding, deliberation may engender competitive attitudes, increase divisiveness, foster anger, and create less, rather than more, understanding. But research on moral psychology suggests ways of constructively structuring deliberation that ought to be tested. That research points to important possibilities that might transform our institutions and methods of decision making into a better democracy.

How different, for example, might the decision affecting Spring Valley have been if deliberative methods had been used? In this hearing, great imbalances in financing had placed all officially recognizable expertise in the hands of Martin Marietta. Residents were told that their local knowledge and aspirations for the community were irrelevant. Smart, skilled, and competent citizens who had conducted extensive research into the environmental and legal issues were told that, because they lacked the proper credentials, their challenges to the experts hired by Martin Marietta could not be considered. Citizens whose lives were affected by the decision were discouraged from speaking, because their stories did not constitute evidence.

These citizens, or a randomly selected group of citizens from the community, could have been allowed to deliberate and to construct a shared vision of the community's future and what place, if any, a sand and gravel mine so close to the village ought to have. When questions arose about the loudness of the operation, the number of jobs it might create, how it would affect the health of residents, citizens could have been allowed to call upon experts at local universities and discuss these questions with them, instead of depending upon the experts hired by Martin Marietta.

[24] Smith and Wales 2000, pp. 60–1; Guston 1999, pp. 469–70; Neblo et al. 2009.

Those who pressed the need for more gravel would have sat across from parents of children with respiratory ailments that might be exacerbated by increased levels of dust, humanizing the decision. Participants could have invited citizens elsewhere who live near sand and gravel operations to hear how they had been affected. Instead of an angry community, alienated from the political processes that determine the fate of their lives and daily reminded of the noisy, dusty eye-sore that has been imposed upon their lives, permanently marring a once idyllic setting, those citizens would live in a different community—ideally one in which the health of its children, the character of its surroundings, and the voices of its citizens mattered.

The process by which the decision had been made would possibly have brought the community closer together. Although all disagreements would not have been erased, there would have been at least an opportunity to create understanding and a shared vision, and to appreciate the plight of those most affected by the decision.

One difference between our lives as children and our lives as adults is that adults seldom have the opportunity to learn about and explore the world together. We individually absorb political information from newspapers, radio, television, and the internet, which we then discuss, if at all, only with family and a few close friends who are basically similar to ourselves in educational background and socio-economic status (Mutz 2002a and b). Our social networks are generally small and homogenous.

Our exposure to the injustices due to the effects of public policy is so limited and indirect that we are largely sheltered from their effects on real persons. We rarely wrestle with these issues or search for better ways *together*. Our moral sensitivity to the effects of policy and the moral quality of our democracy suffer as a result. Deliberative forums provide one remedy for these ills. If they are adequately publicized and policy-makers are required to participate or reply, citizens might begin to see more clearly the goals toward which they should strive politically, and politicians might become more morally responsive and accountable.

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