"Talking It Out": Deliberation With Others versus Deliberation Within

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Abstract: This paper uses a psychological theory of reasoning—the argumentative theory of reasoning—to support the normative appeal of the dialogical version of democratic deliberation at the heart of the deliberative democracy ideal. We use the argumentative theory of reasoning to defend democratic deliberation against two types of critique. Our main target is Goodin and Niemeyer's claim that "deliberation within" rather than deliberation with others does most of the work in terms of changing people's minds. We argue, on the contrary, that if the argumentative theory of reasoning is right that the normal context of reasoning is an exchange of arguments with at least another differently-minded person, then it is more likely that talking things out with others, rather than thinking alone, will have epistemic and/or transformative properties. Our secondary target is Cass Sunstein's claim that the phenomenon of "group polarization" noted to afflict groups of like-minded people casts serious doubts as to the epistemic properties of democratic deliberation. Against Sunstein, the argumentative theory of reasoning predicts that it is only groups of individuals that fail to deliberate properly that are likely to polarize. Where the normal conditions of reasoning are satisfied, dialogical deliberation of the kind favored by most deliberative democrats is likely to have the predicted epistemic and transformative properties.

"Talking It Out": Deliberation With Others versus Deliberation Within

Hélène Landemore and Hugo Mercier

The ideal of democratic deliberation at the heart of theories of deliberative democracies has been criticized from many fronts since its first formulation in the 1990s.[1] As a normative ideal, it is often attacked for being too demanding and too utopian to be worth pursuing. As an empirical practice, democratic deliberation has a mixed empirical record that has brought some to criticize its usefulness in changing people's minds and improving their epistemic status and that of the group. At the two opposite extremes, we find critics who think that either democratic deliberation does not do much to change people's minds or that it changes them for the worse. Thus, Robert Goodin and John S. Niemeyer (2003 and 2008) worry that as a dialogical exchange between democratic citizens, democratic deliberation may do less to change people's preferences than the kind of monological reflection that they advocate instead as "deliberation within" (Goodin 2000, 2003 and 2008). By contrast, Cass Sunstein has repeatedly warned of the dangers of deliberation among like-minded people given what he calls the "the law of group polarization" (Sunstein 2000), or the tendency of some groups to move towards a more extreme version of the group's pre-deliberative preferences. Given the extent to which he believes that this law afflicts groups, Sunstein seems to suggest that, short of being able to avail the deliberating group of full-information—which he assumes is the

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[1] After Joseph Bessette coined the term deliberative democracy in 1980 (Bessette 1980 and 1994), many authors contributed to elaborating the notion, including Jon Elster, Jürgen Habermas, Joshua Cohen, John Rawls, Amy Gutmann and Dennis Thompson, John Dryzeck, and Seyla Benhabib.

solution to polarization—we should probably often privilege non deliberative judgment aggregation over deliberation.

In effect, the normative ideal at the heart of deliberative democracy—democratic deliberation as an exchange of arguments among free and equal citizens—is not currently fully buttressed by empirical results in political science or social psychology. Sometimes group deliberation homogenizes attitudes, sometimes it polarizes them; sometimes group decisions are better than individual decisions, sometimes not (e.g., Kerr et al 1996). As Denis Thompson recently put it, when it comes to evaluating what democratic deliberation does and whether it does anything good, "the general conclusion of surveys of the empirical research so far is that taken together the findings are mixed or inconclusive" (Thompson 2008). Even the results observed in the "deliberative polls" conducted with remarkable success across the globe, included in societies divided along religious or linguistic lines (e.g., Fishkin 2009) do not entirely settle the question. Deliberative polls indeed measure post-deliberative preferences and opinions against pre-deliberative ones, without framing the measurement in epistemic terms nor providing more than negative reasons to believe that the post-deliberative views actually converge towards the truth. At best one can verify that the beliefs associated with the new preferences and opinions are more informed and that the deliberations are not afflicted by the usual suspects for poor epistemic outcomes (group polarization, lack of diversity, lack of single peakedness etc.). A recent breakthrough on that front is a recent study of a deliberative poll specifically designed to estimate the specific contribution of the formal, face-to-face deliberation at the heart of the deliberative democracy ideal (Farrar et alii 2010). The study demonstrates that the transformative effect of formal, face-to-face

deliberation is real, at least on less salient issues, that is issues that are not present in public awareness from the beginning (Farrar et alii 2010), where it contributes to making people's opinions more informed. This can legitimately counts as a refutation, albeit a partial one (for non-salient issues only), of Goodin and Niemeyer's claim that deliberation does little to change people's minds. The results presented in this article also go some way towards demonstrating that deliberation has epistemic properties but it is far from conclusive. Indeed what the results show is that something happens during the formal, face-to-face deliberation by contrast with the informal deliberation phase that precedes it. The study however does not really open the black box of deliberation per se. Further, it remains to be shown that more informed opinions contribute to better judgments overall, as measured against a procedure-independent standard of correctness that is not purely factual. While it is likely indeed that more informed opinions correlate with better judgments, this is not necessary. In order to verify that assumption, the experiments would have to be framed in explicitly epistemic terms, rather than in terms of measuring a variation in pre-deliberative and post-deliberative opinions.

In any case, pending replication of this last experiment as well as further refinements of it, we take it that very few democratic theorists, would be willing to claim that the normative ideal of democratic deliberation can remain immune to empirical challenges and most of them are or ought to be bothered by the remaining uncertainty regarding the epistemic properties of democratic deliberation, particularly on salient isssues. Of course, as just said, part of the problem of the current literature lies in the fact that "deliberation" is not always properly construed in the experiments aiming at measuring its effects, nor are the standards by which the transformative and epistemic

properties of deliberation measured consistent across experiments or even relevant

(ranging from various factual and logical standards to more vague notions of

"betterness"). In Farrar et alii, the experiment does not prove that people actually used

arguments—as we insist that deliberation properly construed requires--, simply that they

changed their views on some issues. It could thus be that conducting better designed, or

rather more specifically designed experiments, might yield more definitive results, one

way or the other, in the near future. One way to resolve the ambiguity pointed out by

Thompson might thus be to keep running lab experiments and more explicitly epistemic

studies of deliberative polls.

Another approach, however, which is not exclusive of the empirical route,

although it is less trodden for now, consists in going back to the theory of deliberative

democracy and seeking to confront the model of democratic deliberation at its normative

core with the theoretical insights of other disciplines. In the same way that deliberative

democracy has benefited from confronting the results of empirical studies of deliberation

(as reviewed for example in Mendelberg 2002, Delli Carpini et al. 2004, and Ryfe, 2005),

becoming aware of the empirical constraints that may weigh on the normative ideal and

sometimes integrating those in the ideal (e.g., the role of power, interests, emotions and

non discursive exchanges), we think that deliberative democracy can also be enriched by

considering other disciplines' theoretical approaches to deliberation or certain aspects of

deliberation.[2] We turn to psychology and, more specifically, evolutionary psychology

because we think these disciplines can enlighten what is in our view the central core of

deliberation, namely "reasoning." Indeed, for all their differences, most deliberative

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[2] We think that the insights of psychology, including evolutionary psychology, are important to assess the plausibility of claims made by deliberative democrats about the conditions under which democratic deliberation may or may not change individuals' minds, and in particular change them in the right way.

democrats acknowledge the centrality of reasoning as a core component of deliberation. It is enough for us that psychology has a lot to say about reasoning, and evolutionary psychology about the function of reasoning, to make the insights of those two disciplines relevant for democratic theory.

The first section of the paper presents the theory of reasoning as arguing as it has been developed by Dan Sperber (2001), Hugo Mercier and Dan Sperber (2011) and Mercier and Landemore (Submitted). The second section uses that theory to support the normative ideal of "talking things out" with others against Goodin and Niemeyer's preference for "deliberation within." The third section turns to Sunstein's objection based on his hypothesized "law of group polarization" and shows that the argumentative theory of reasoning can make sense of it.

1.The argumentative theory of reasoning

The argumentative theory of reasoning (Mercier and Sperber In Press, Mercier and Landemore In Press, Sperber 2001, see also Billig 1996 and Gibbard 1990) defines reasoning as a specific cognitive mechanism that aims at finding and evaluating reasons, *so that individuals can convince other people and evaluate their arguments.*

This definition may seem quite intuitive and obvious but it is in fact a marked break from another, more classical theory of reasoning as a cognitive mechanism. According to the more classical views of reasoning (Evans & Over, 1996; Kahneman, 2003; Stanovich, 2004), reasoning allows us to improve our epistemic status by falsifying our own beliefs and building on these foundations in order to reach knowledge and improve the correctness of our judgments and decisions. By contrast, in the

argumentative theory of reasoning, reasoning serves an argumentative function, which consists in: producing and evaluating arguments in dialogic contexts. On that view, when reasoning is used to produce arguments, it has, and should have, little concern for the objective truth. When you want to convince someone of a given proposition, you do not check that the proposition is true, since you already believe it. All you are interested in is finding good arguments that support this proposition and are likely to convince the listener. Conversely, as the listener, you want to be able to evaluate arguments in order to decide whether you should accept the conclusion or not. In that case, you are at least partially concerned with the truth since you want to be able to change your mind when it is warranted. However, even if reasoning is mostly truth-oriented when it evaluates an argument, it is still somewhat biased by its argumentative function: people will evaluate others' arguments but they do not naturally turn the same critical eye on their own productions.[3]

The advantage of this theory about the function of reasoning is that it is more compatible with what we know of human reasoning than the classical theory. It is well-established in psychology that when reasoning is used internally to help individuals generate knowledge and make better decisions, its performance is often disappointing. People have trouble understanding simple arguments in abstract, de-contextualized form (Evans 2002). Reasoning fails to override blatantly wrong intuitions (Denes-Raj and Epstein 1994). In some cases, more reasoning can even lead to worse outcomes: it can

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[3] One could imagine another design in which evaluation would be limited, or even entirely absent, in which people always try to falsify the arguments others give them, and people would only be convinced when they run out of counter-arguments. Such a mechanism however would be somewhat cumbersome: people are very good at producing arguments, and convincing someone would be likely to be a very long and protracted process. In any case, people do seem to be able to evaluate arguments: we can all recall cases in which we heard an argument that changed our mind on the spot, just because we understood, saw its strength and accepted it.

make us too sure of ourselves (Koriat et alii 1980), it allows us to maintain discredited beliefs (Guenther et Alicke 2008), and it drives us towards poor decisions (Shafir et al 1993). A major problem for the classical theory, in particular, is the omnipresent confirmation bias, which leads individuals to seek information and arguments only for the side they already favor. Is seems fair to conclude that, as a tool for individual use, reasoning is not particularly compelling. Evolutionary psychology suggests that if individual reasoning is so bad at figuring out the truth when used internally, then this cannot be its main function.

On the classical approach to reasoning, these empirical findings are profoundly disturbing because it seems that human reasoning is flawed and in need of correction. The argumentative approach, on the other hand, turns what seem like vices into virtues. When the goal of reasoning is to convince others, then the confirmation bias is actually useful, since it will lead to the identification of information and arguments for the side the individual already favors. The fact that people are good at falsifying statements that oppose their views makes sense under both theories, but seems particularly useful if the goal of reasoning is to convince others.

One implication of the argumentative theory of reasoning is that the "normal" conditions for reasoning are deliberative and social. Reasoning consists in exchanging arguments with at least another person, whom one is trying to convince and falsify the views of. The argumentative theory of reasoning uses the following definition of deliberation: "*an activity is deliberative to the extent that reasoning is used to gather and evaluate arguments for and against a given proposition.*" Notice that this definition makes reasoning a centerpiece of deliberation, in agreement with the definition of

deliberation by most contemporary deliberative democrats. Deliberative democrats generally embrace Aristotle's definition of deliberation as "an exchange of arguments for or against something" (*Rhetoric*, I, 2). They specifically emphasize the reasoning aspect of that exchange of arguments, as in Joshua Cohen's definition of democratic deliberation as the "public use of arguments and *reasoning* (Cohen 1997: 1, our emphasis) or Bernard Manin's claim that "a communication process qualifies as deliberation only if the participants employ arguments, that is propositions aiming to persuade members of the decision making body" (Manin 2005: 14). Manin is particularly explicit in connecting the centrality of argumentation with a specific mode of reasoning. According to him, "we say that we deliberate, whether individually or collectively, when we engage in a *distinctive mode of mental activity, more specifically a distinctive mode of reasoning"* (Manin 2005: 14, our emphasis). While there are many varieties of deliberative democrats,[4] it seems to us that an important common point remains the centrality of reasoning and argumentation and specifically the centrality of an argumentative form of reasoning.

Let us emphasize a few key points of the proposed definition. First, the cognitive activity of reasoning—the usage of "central" as opposed to "peripheral" routes—is crucial. Thus, the content of the utterances being exchanged is not all that matters, the way they are generated is important as well. Two actors reciting from memory the scripted text of a deliberation would not be deliberating per se. Second, the definition

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[4] Deliberative democrats sometimes add other things to that definition, such as the specific requirement that the exchange of arguments must take place "among equal citizens" or the quest for a rational consensus (e.g., Cohen 1997: 72; Habermas 1996, Schauer 1999, Manin 2005). "Agonistic" democrats insist on the importance of non-rational dimensions of discourse, like storytelling, emotions, and greetings (e.g., Mouffe 1999). Some recent deliberative democrats have even added to the argumentative function negotiation and bargaining, when properly constrained (Mansbridge et alii 2010). We are less sure about the compatibility of our definition with recent developments by Dryzeck and Niemeyer (Dryzeck and Niemeyer 2006 and Niemeyer and Dryzeck 2007).

stresses the necessity of an exchange, or more precisely, a *feedback loop* between reasoning from at least two points of view. Assuming that two people each hold one point of view, the following chain of events is required for genuine deliberation to take place: person A uses reasoning to make an argument from point of view *a*; person B uses reasoning to examine A's argument from point of view *b,* which is at least partially opposed to point of view *a*; person B then uses reasoning to create an argument that partially or fully opposes the previous argument from the point of view *b*; A uses reasoning to examine B's argument from point of view *a*.

Notice that the definition of deliberation presented here allows for the possibility of "internal" as well as "external" deliberation, since it is possible even for a single person to *find arguments for an opposite point of view than hers*. If A internally engages in such an exchange of arguments between the two points of view a and b, then this person is truly deliberating, in her head, with her internal representation of B's point of view. Notice, importantly, that if A finds arguments supporting her own point of view only, then she will still be reasoning, but deliberation will not have taken place. Similarly a group of people who all think like A and find arguments supporting the point of view a are not properly deliberating, even if these arguments are different from theirs, as long as they support the same position.

The definition of deliberation that we endorse here thus draws a sharp distinction between proper deliberation, which involves the mental activity specified above (reasoning), and conversation or discussion, which may not involve that mental activity at all.[5] According to the argumentative theory of reasoning, such deliberation forms the

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[5] Manin has himself called "debate" the type of argumentative deliberation that we embrace, by contrast with discussion. We do not use that term but simply narrow down our concept of deliberation to exclude

normal context for reasoning. Here it should be noted that "normal"— has no normative connotations (as in Millikan 1987), but simply refers to a set of facts about the conditions in which we claim that reasoning evolved. The normal conditions for the use of reasoning are, according to the argumentative theory of reasoning, those of deliberation with at least another person and the abnormal ones those of the solitary mind or non-deliberating groups. Notice that saying this is a descriptive claim that can be true of false but has no implications in terms of what is right or wrong. In particular, our claim about the normal conditions of reasoning is not a normative claim about the conditions under which democratic deliberation *ought* to take place. Our suggestions will at best be prudential, not moral. Thus, in the same way that taking into account the empirical finding about the properties of democratic deliberation may help formulate or reconsider various ideals of deliberative democracy (in the sense that an ought at least implies a can), we believe that knowing a few things about the conditions under which reasoning works best may help refine that same deliberative ideal.

Another, less obvious, implication of the argumentative theory of reasoning is that reasoning is more likely to yield epistemic benefits for the individual—that is be conducive to true or truer beliefs—when it takes place in its normal, deliberative context. The idea is that even if the function of reasoning is argumentative--to find and evaluate arguments—rather than purely epistemic, it should still lead to an improvement in epistemic status. Otherwise their would be no point listening to other people's arguments--and then no point to make any argument. How can the same ability--reasoning--work well in argumentative contexts but poorly in individual contexts? The explanation goes as

mere discussion from it. Notice also that we are not saying that in the phenomenon of group polarization, people do not reason, simply that they do not deliberate.

follows. When reasoning alone, an individual is likely to only use reasoning to produce arguments. She will have little inclination to evaluate her own arguments. As a consequence, she will let her confirmation bias run unchecked, leading to the accumulation of arguments for the side she already believes in. Similarly, a group of people who share views and make no effort to evaluate arguments for their shared opinion or seek arguments supporting the opposing view will see their individual confirmation biases reinforce each other. By contrast, in a situation where several individuals who disagree on a view exchange arguments with each other, what happens is that a wealth of arguments for each side is produced, and that the arguments are thoroughly evaluated by people who disagree with their conclusion, balancing out the confirmation biases of each individual. Combined together, individuals' confirmation biases and their abilities to evaluate others' arguments are conducive to epistemic improvement for each individual and, therefore, for the group as a whole as well. A crucial assumption here is that once people are faced with strong enough arguments, they can recognize the strength of these arguments and change their minds in consequence. This assumption is actually supported by empirical evidence in logical and mathematical problems (Laughlin & Ellis, 1986; Moshman & Geil, 1998). All in all, the idea is that in a properly deliberative context, an individual's confirmation bias has more chances to be checked by the confirmation bias and evaluation mechanisms of a person who disagrees with her. As a result, each individual epistemic status, and thus that of group, is likely to be enhanced.[6]

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[6] One could imagine an alternative theory in which reasoning would have no epistemic value whatsoever, it would purely be used for social ends such as displaying our wit. However, it seems more likely that reasoning should mostly serve an epistemic function. Having true beliefs is a central goal of cognitive

Of course, the claims made here are only probabilistic. It is possible for an individual to apply him or herself and successfully think up counter-arguments to his or her prior views. Similarly, it is possible for like-minded groups to do the same things, for example by assigning someone the role of the devil's advocate. The theory simply posits that given what we know of the strength of the confirmation bias and the mental discipline it requires for people to fight it, solitary reasoning or reasoning with like-minded people are less likely to lead to good epistemic outcomes.

On that view therefore, reasoning is an argumentative device. Its function is social: it is to find and evaluate arguments in a dialogic context.[7] In any case, the key aspect of the argumentative theory of reasoning is that, contrary to traditional classical models, which see reasoning as best deployed in the solitary confinement of one person's mind, reasoning is here assumed to perform best when deployed to argue with other human beings. In other words, reasoning is supposed to yield an epistemic betterment of individual beliefs through the social route of argumentation rather than the individual route of private ratiocination.

How is all of this of relevance for deliberative democracy? Some deliberative democrats have argued that democratic deliberation does not do much to change people's minds and that deliberative democrats should shift focus from interpersonal exchanges towards "deliberation within." If the argumentative theory of reasoning is true, however, this is likely to be ill advised. In the next section, we consider the case on which Goodin and Niemeyer build their recommendation and show that it does not hold sufficient water

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mechanisms. Someone who has wrong beliefs about what food is edible, for instance, is unlikely to leave many descendants.

[7] Note that saying that the function of reasoning is social does not mean that reasoning has been selected to serve the interests of groups rather than individuals. In fact reasoning with others directly benefit individuals and only indirectly the group.

to threaten the prediction of the argumentative theory of reasoning that "talking things out" with others is a safer bet towards epistemic improvement than "deliberation within."

2. Deliberation within versus deliberation with others

Goodin and Niemeyer note that since the deliberative turn of the 1990s, most deliberative democrats have moved away from the monological ideal of deliberation at the heart of the early Rawls' model of the original position[8] and embraced instead Habermas' later emphasis on actual, interpersonal engagements.[9] Far from condoning that move away from hypothetical imagined discourse toward actual deliberation, however, Goodin and Niemeyer see it as partially misguided (Goodin and Niemeyer 2003 and Goodin 2008: 38[10]). For them, it is "deliberation within" rather than talking with others—or "external deliberation"—that should be the focus of theories of deliberative democracy.

Robert Goodin first coined the expression of "deliberation within" as a way to capture the pondering of reasons that goes on in an individuals' mind prior to and also during his engagement in deliberation with others. This pondering of reasons involves an

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[8] In a Theory of Justice (1971), Rawls famously described an original position in which the basic principles of an ideally just society are supposed to be figured out by a deliberating group of rational individuals strategically placed behind a veil of ignorance. In some ways, the original position is an instance of democratic deliberation, in the sense that the principles of justice are supposed to be discovered through a discursive exchange of arguments amongst free and equal representatives of the people. On the other hand, however, those individuals are so idealized—stripped in particular of knowledge about their individual characteristics and all but the most general and impersonal form of knowledge about others and the world—that their deliberation is more that of rational clones than that of real individuals with their own identities and different ways of approaching questions. As a commentator remarked, "[t]his is deliberation of a sort but only in terms of the weighing of arguments in the mind, not testing them in real political interaction… [It] downplays the social or interactive aspect of deliberation" (Dryzeck 2000: 15, cited in Goodin 2008: 38).

[9] Against Rawls' monological version of democratic deliberation, Habermas and others have put forward the ideal of a more explicitly dialogical and intersubjective exchange in which the participants are supposed to maintain their concrete differences even as they seek a rational consensus (Habermas 1995: 113). Furthermore, the result of this ideal deliberation cannot be imagined by the lone thinker and so no individual solitary reasoning can substitute for it. Though ideal, the deliberation must be actualized.

[10] While the original article by Goodin and Niemeyer is from 2003, all the citations will be to its latest version as a chapter in Goodin 2008.

exercise in reflection and imagination, in which one is supposed to put oneself in other people's shoes and imagine what their arguments might be. In that sense, deliberation within is not unlike the hypothetical, monological type of ratiocination defended by Rawls. By contrast, Goodin labels "external deliberation" the type of discursive exchanges by which a group collectively ponders the reasons defended by different individuals.[11]

The reason why Goodin and Niemeyer think we should return our focus to hypothetical/monological rather than actual/dialogical deliberation is because as far as changing people's minds, deliberation within is, in their view, where the action is. Asking "When does deliberation begin?," they answer that not only does deliberation begin in the head of individuals prior to their engagement in social and interactive deliberation but that much of the work of deliberation ends there. Whatever is later on externalized or talked out with others does not do as much as what happened earlier in the privacy of people's minds. There is some ambiguity as to what Goodin and Niemeyer mean by the "work" of deliberation but we infer from the paper that what they mean is the way in which deliberation transforms opinions and preferences for the better, by making them more coherent, more informed, and overall more correct. In that sense, we will identify that part of the "work" attributed to deliberation that Goodin and Niemeyer think is best left to deliberation within as opposed to external deliberation as "transformative" and

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[11] The choice of "external" to characterize the deliberation that goes on in social settings is slightly misleading in that it may suggest that in deliberation with others, ideas are processed in the ether, outside of anyone's heads. Of course, the actual processing of arguments is always taking place in someone's head, not in some fictitious "group mind." But the idea expressed by "external deliberation" is that when many individuals deliberate, their parallel individual reasoning takes as an input the output of at least one other person in the group, rather than functioning in autarky and generating all the arguments pros and cons from the inside. To avoid the ambiguity, we ourselves prefer the clearer expression "deliberation with others."

even "epistemic."[12] For Goodin and Niemeyer, there seems to be both a chronological

and epistemic priority of deliberation within over deliberation with others.

In fact, regarding external deliberation, they argue that the point of it is mostly

one of democratic legitimation:

> Surely it is axiomatic that democratic legitimation can come only through public
> processes. Hypothetical imagined discourse—imagining what you would say if
> you were in their shoes, and letting the conversation play out in our own head
> (what I call "deliberation within" (Goodin 2000)—can never substitute for the
> external democratic validation that comes from more overtly political processes.
> It can only be a supplement, never a substitute (Goodin 2008: 39-40).

Goodin and Niemeyer think that besides this legitimation function external deliberation is

not doing a lot. According to them, "much (maybe most) of the work of deliberation

occurs well before the formal proceedings [of public deliberative processes]—before the

organized "talking together" ever begin" "(Goodin 2008: 40). In our view, what Goodin

and Niemeyer's argument as a whole proceeds to show is that while external deliberation

is necessary to validate decisions in a purely procedural way, it is not nearly as useful as

deliberative democrats like to think when it comes to transformative and epistemic

functions.

Goodin and Niemeyer's argument relies essentially on the careful case study of an

Australian citizen's jury. Convened in January 2000, the task of the Australian citizen's

jury studied by Goodin and Niemeyer was to discuss policy options for a controversial

road, called the Bloomfield Track, running through the Daintree rainforest in a part of

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[12] See Cohen 1989 for a definition of "epistemic" democracy, Estlund 2008 and Marti for a defense of
epistemic approaches to democracy, Anderson 2006, Bohman 2006, Habermas 2006, Marti for the
epistemic properties of democratic deliberation per se, Goodin 2003 and 2008 for the epistemic properties
of democracy and majority rule, and Landemore 2010 and 2011 for a sustained epistemic case for
democracy. See also Estlund1998, Raz 1990, Habermas 2005, Cohen 2009 for debates about the role of
truth in liberal politics. As just mentioned, Goodin has himself defended the truth-tracking properties of
democracy and majority rule so we do not think it is a stretch to interpret the work he and Niemeyer sees
deliberation as doing as partly epistemic.

Australia known as Wet Tropics World Heritage. The issue was, roughly, to decide how to reconcile the problem of community access and environmental concerns for the unique combination of rainforest and coastal reef endangered by the track. Without going too much into the specifics of the experiment, what the analysis brings into relief is how most of the attitudinal changes in jury members took place prior to actual formal deliberation with others jury members, during what Goodin and Niemeyer characterizes as the "information" phase. During this information phase, jurors visited the rain forest and the Bloomfield track, were given background briefings, and presentations by an interrogation of witnesses. This information phase allowed for verbal exchanges between jurors, on site and over tea and lunch at different points, but none of those were organized as the official deliberation phase. Goodin and Niemeyer explicitly define deliberation in the narrower sense of "*collectively organized* conversations among a group of coequals aiming at reacting (or moving towards) some joint view on some issues of common concern" (Goodin 2008: 48, our emphasis). Both questionnaires measured attitudinal variations on given propositions, such as "Upgrade the track to a dirt road suitable for two-wheel drive vehicles" or "Close the track and rehabilitate the area," as well as subjective assessment by the jury members of what caused them to change their minds. Answers to these questionnaires indicate that what did the most to change individiuals' prior beliefs and stabilize their ultimate judgments was the earlier exposure to relevant information and the internal reflections prompted by it, rather than the later discursive exchanges of the "deliberative phase" (Goodin 2008: 49).

Substantively speaking, what happened during the information phase is that jurors initially concerned about the impact of the Bloomfield Track on the coral reefs nearby

were no longer so worried halfway through it. Similarly, jurors who initially worried about the importance of the track for tourism and as an access road for people living in remote northern towns were largely reassured. By contrast, during the discussion phase, a similarly large change occurred in attitudes toward only one proposition. The proposition was "I will be made worse off by any decision about the Bloomfield Track." While worried that this might be true throughout the information phase, jurors started to see that fear dissipate over the course of the formal deliberation.

According to Goodin and Niemeyer, what the case study shows is that the information phase was much more important than the deliberation phase in transforming jurors' policy preferences (Goodin 2008: 49). Indeed, "the simple process of jurors seeing the site for themselves, focusing their minds on the issues, and listening to what experts had to say did all the work in changing jurors' attitudes. Talking among themselves, as a jury, did virtually none of it" (Goodin 2008: 58-59). This would seem to establish the crucial importance of "deliberation within" and the lesser importance of external deliberation.

Such a finding, they further argue, has potentially important implications for deliberative democracy. While it may be the case that the micro-deliberation of a jury is different from the macro-deliberation of mass democracy, there are nonetheless some lessons to be drawn from the first to improve the practice of the second. Goodin and Niemeyer thus invite us to speculate that much of the change of opinions that occurs in mass democracy is not so much due to any formal, organized group discussion— presumably those in national assemblies between representatives as well as those taking place in town-hall meetings or during such things as AmericaSpeaks or Deliberation

Day—but to the internal reflection individually conducted ahead of those, "within individuals themselves or in informal interactions, well in advance of any formal, organized group discussion" (Goodin 2008: 59).

Goodin and Niemeyer find support for the hypothesis that most of the work is done prior to group discussion in the large literature on attitudes and mechanisms, in particular the literature on "central" versus "peripheral" routes to the formation of attitudes. Where peripheral routes consist in relying on cognitive shortcuts (such as party affiliation, attractiveness of the candidates, etc.) and intuitions to, say, evaluate a candidate's competence, "central routes" involve by contrast the kind of cognitive effort characteristic of Goodin's internal-reflective deliberative ideal, such as the careful weighing of different positions and arguments.[13] Further, Goodin and Niemeyer add that it is important for their argument in favor of deliberation within that "there is nothing intrinsic to the "central" route that requires group deliberation. Research in this area stresses instead the importance simply of "sufficient impetus" for engaging in deliberation, such as when an individual is stimulated by personal involvement in the issue" (Goodin 2008: 60).

According to Goodin and Niemeyer, the deliberations of this particular Australian jury verify the hypotheses of the model of "deliberation within" in that deliberation of the more internal kind did more to change people's attitudes than formal group deliberation of the more discursive sort. They conclude that the deliberative phase "was of much less consequence than the "information phase"—contrary to the expectations of discursive

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[13] We think that the use of central paths is more generally characteristic of proper deliberation per se, whether individual or collective.

democrats who would have us privilege conversation over cogitation as politically the most important mode of deliberation" (Goodin 2008: 49-50).

Goodin and Niemeyer are of course aware of the limitations of their relying on a single case study to support such a general conclusion.[14] Not only is it not at all clear that one case-study is enough to support the more general claim that deliberation within is generally "of more consequence"—and specifically, as we interpret him as implying, of more epistemic consequence than external deliberation. But it is not even clear that the example shows as much as Goodin and Niemeyer say it does.

A first problem is that the informational phase is far from pure and contains in fact a lot of deliberative aspects that could be credited for the change of jurors' minds, rather than any "internal" deliberation. Goodin and Niemeyer themselves grants that "much of the work of the first [informative] phase was done discursively. "Witnesses talked, they were interrogated, and so on. There was also much talking among jurors themselves, both informally (over lunch or tea) and formally (in deciding what questions to ask of witnesses)." Insisting, then, as Goodin and Niemeyer do, on keeping the information and deliberation phases separate and attributing all the merit of opinion change to the first phase, seems quite artificial. Sure, the "formal official task of the citizens' jury" (Goodin 2008: 48) was in one case gathering information and, in the other, deliberating. But the fact that much of the reasoning that prompted the jury's changes of minds occurred in the first phase cannot be attributed to internal deliberation only, to the extent that it is highly likely that the informal and formal exchanges between jurors at that point were containing arguments for or against keeping the track or closing it. Since

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[14] Another recent paper by Muhlberger and Weber (2006) seems to support the conclusions of Goodin and Niemeyer that information matters more than deliberation.

none of the content of the exchanges during that first information phase is documented—only the content of opinions at different points in the experiment are measured—it is very difficult to judge whether this information phase should not rather be recast as informal deliberation.

To be fair, Goodin and Niemeyer take into account that objection when they remark that the fact that some discussion took place in the first phase of the jury discussion might make it "a model of deliberation in the public sphere of "civil society."" In other words, they admit that the experiment did not so much juxtapose an information and a deliberation phase, as two deliberative phases, one informal, one formal. We think this is a rather powerful objection. Goodin and Niemeyer, however, counter it in a few lines by claiming that the Bloomfield track had long been a contentious issue within the public sphere of which jurors were already part prior to engaging in that particular jury, so that "something in that initial phase of the jury must have made a difference to them, that informal discussions in the public sphere had previously not" (Goodin 2008: 52). A critique may well grant the point and yet deny that that "something" had anything to do with deliberation within and all to do with a higher motivation to listen to what is said in the mini-public sphere of the jury than to what was ever said in the larger public sphere. We think that the smaller setting of a mini-public might in effect be more conducive to the use of central routes than either the too large setting of a wide public sphere or the purely internal one of deliberation within. The higher motivation itself could be explained by, say, a heightened sense of efficacy in the smaller rather than the larger public sphere. The point of this remark is just to emphasize that one can come up with an alternative account of the "something" responsible for making the information phase conducive to

policy-preference changes that does without Goodin and Niemeyer's hypothesis of the role of deliberation within.[15]

As to the fact that jurors themselves perceived that their preferences had changed more during the information rather than the discussion phase,[16] this could be just an artifact of the way the experiment is presented to them. Even if informal deliberation took place during the first phase, jurors are not allowed by the questionnaire to conceptualize this first phase as "discussion" but instead as "information." In our view, these limitations, partially acknowledged by Goodin and Niemeyer themselves, cast some doubt as to the general validity of their conclusion.

Finally, regarding the relation between the use of "central routes" and collective deliberation, Goodin and Niemeyer are right to say that "nothing intrinsic" to the central route or "deeper deliberative reflection" requires group deliberation. Yet several times they come close to admitting that group deliberation remains the main and most common impetus for both. This, however, fits with the predictions of the argumentative theory of reasoning. The 'normal' context for reasoning or the use of "central routes"—the context for which reasoning is designed to work (Millikan 1987)—is one of external deliberation. This does not mean that people can not properly reason by themselves, that is, make use of central routes, but it does suggest a certain priority, if not superiority, of collective over internal deliberation. In other words, while human beings do not need an actual collective deliberation to be able to reason properly, the fact that the normal conditions of

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[15] The same analysis about the role of motivation as a stimulant to reasoning could be applied to a recent paper by Muhlberg and Weber (2006), which seems to support Goodin and Niemeyer's conclusion in establishing the superiority of information over deliberation. In both reported experiments, all participants are anticipating the prospect of group deliberation, even if they have not yet taken part in group deliberation or will not formally do so. In both cases, it could very well be this motivating factor that does the work, rather than deliberation within.

[16] Three quarters of the jurors thought discussion was the least important factor in explaining their change of mind (Goodin 2008: 51).

reasoning are those where one naturally encounter a variety of points of view makes it more likely that individuals will use central routes when discussing with others than when reasoning alone.

Goodin and Niemeyer's case-study does not warrant the conclusion that deliberation within does more work than external deliberation. In the absence of more compelling evidence and given the additional support provided by a recent study on deliberative poll (Farrar et alii 2010), we think that the argumentative theory of reasoning remains unchallenged in confirming the pride of place given by most existing deliberative democrats to actual interpersonal exchanges between individuals. The theory predicts that external-collective processes, rather than internal-reflective processes, should be at least as central to the process of democratic deliberation as is commonly supposed. This does not mean that Goodin and Niemeyer's advice—that more attention should be paid to internal deliberation—should not be heeded. We are simply skeptical that focusing on solitary reasoning is the most fruitful way to work towards improving the quality of democratic deliberations.

This is not to say, however, that talking things out with others, rather than reasoning alone, will always produce good outcomes. As we already saw, the empirical record of group discussion is mixed at best. We think the argumentative theory of reasoning can help make sense of those results. The theory in particular accommodates what is generally seen as a major objection to democratic deliberation, namely Sunstein's so-called "law of group polarization." In the next section, we explain what the challenge is and how our theory is equipped to answer it.

3.The Objection from the Law of Group Polarization

In different books and in an influential article, Sunstein has argued that a major problem for democratic deliberation is what he calls "the law of group polarization"[17] or the tendency for a group already sharing some views to become more extreme in these views following joint discussion. Of course, among some polarizing groups, there might be some that actually converge on the truth, so polarization need not always indicate that deliberation makes things worse rather than better. If polarization is a "law" that applies no matter what the original consensus, however, it is highly dubious that in most cases the polarization effect is connected to any epistemic improvement. If group polarization is such a systematic phenomenon, it would seem to provide a strong argument for turning away from democratic deliberation towards either a mere aggregation of individual judgments or towards individual "deliberation within," or a combination of both. Furthermore, this "law" seems to contradict our prediction that reasoning with others is good at improving the epistemic status of individuals (and indirectly the group as well).

According to Sunstein, the law of polarization accounts for why, for example, a group of moderately profeminist women will become more strongly profeminist after discussion; why after discussion, citizens of France become more critical of the United States and its intentions with respect to economic aid; or why after discussion, whites predisposed to show racial prejudices offer more negative responses to the question wether white racism is responsible for conditions faced by African-Americans in American cities.[18]In order to explain these phenomena, Sunstein turns to two well-

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[17] The other problems affecting deliberation are, according to Sunstein, the fact that human deliberators are subject to heuristics and biases, the existence of hidden profiles and the common knowledge effect, and the possibility of informational and reputational cascades.
[18] All examples are from Sunstein 2000: 2.

established (theoretically and empirically) mechanisms that underlie group polarization. The first involves social influences, that is, the fact that people want to be perceived favorably by other members of the group. Such tendencies create a pressure to conform to what is believed to be the dominant norm. The result is to press the group's position toward one or another extreme, and also to induce shifts in individual members.

The other mechanism is the limited pool of "persuasive arguments" to which members of the group are exposed, and the path-dependency that this creates towards more extreme versions of foregone conclusions. To the extent that individuals' positions are partly a function of which convincing arguments they are exposed to and to the extent that a group already prejudiced in one direction will produce a much greater amount of argument for one side of the case than for the other, group discussion can only reinforce individuals' prior beliefs. As Sunstein remarks, "the key is the existence of a limited argument pool, one that is skewed (speaking purely descriptively) in a particular direction" (Sunstein 2000: 14).

Sunstein derives some general conclusions about the impact of group discussion on individual and group conclusions. One of the most striking is the following: "The phenomenon of group polarization […] raises severe doubts about the value of deliberation" (Sunstein 2000: 26). He even goes as far as to suggest that while deliberation may be justified as a social practice as the most "reasonable and fair way" to reach a decision, if it is the truth of the matter that we are after, then we might be worse with deliberation in trying to figure it out than with a mere aggregation of pre-deliberative judgments.[19] As for Goodin and Niemeyer, the value of democratic

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[19] In Sunstein's words: "If shifts are occurring as a result of partial and frequently skewed argument pools, the results of deliberative judgments may be far worse than the results of simply taking the median of

deliberation for Sunstein seems more procedural than epistemic. In fact, whereas Goodin and Niemeyer only suggested the relative neutrality of democratic deliberation—it did not change people's views much, but not necessarily for the worse—Sunstein seems to think that deliberation change people minds—by polarizing them—and most likely for the worse. For him, the mechanisms just mentioned "give little reason for confidence that deliberation is making things better than worse" (Sunstein 2000: 26). If group deliberation has such terrible outcomes, is this a reason to embrace internal deliberation and an aggregation of views based on those internal deliberations? We think not.

First, the problem of group polarization does not constitute a reason to embrace deliberation within over external deliberation because, even if the pressure to conform were not to affect the lone reasoner (which nothing guarantees), the limited pool of arguments effect certain does.

Second, the case of external deliberation that one could be tempted to build on Sunstein's law of group polarization suffers from a weakness in Sunstein's argument, which is that he strictly focuses on the input of group discussion—the argument pool, the information, the "perspectives"—but entirely neglects the processes through which these data are actually used in the course of the discussion. Sunstein implies that as long as the input is sufficiently diverse, and pretty much already contains the arguments pro and cons a particular position, the individuals will be able to reach a balanced and epistemically sound position. The quality of the output, in other words, is entirely conditional on the diversity of the output. Recall, however, that in our definition, deliberation must involve "reasoning" and therefore involve a genuine consideration of arguments for and against something. An interpersonal exchange in which arguments for both sides are not properly

predeliberation judgments."

considered ought not to count as "deliberative." It is thus the actual use of the arguments, not just their availability, that makes the difference, according to us, between proper deliberation—and one likely conducive to sound epistemic outcomes—and mere discussion. What matters is not so much the initial pool of arguments, but the way those arguments are exploited, that is truly activated by reasoning as arguments, not just information. Thus, in the case of an argument pool that is strongly skewed in one direction, the disagreement of a single individual can be sufficient to bring to the group's attention and defend the few arguments that go against the grain. Conversely, even if the pool of arguments is balanced, a one-minded group will be unlikely to mobilize arguments on both sides of the debate. Most likely, they will activate only arguments that support the side of the debate that they are already on and thus attain a biases result.

From that point of view, many of the discursive exchanges among like-minded people described by Sunstein—groups of feminists, Anti-American French, or racist Americans—are likely to fall short of the requirement of deliberation as we call it. The fact that such exchanges lead to polarization is therefore not an indictment of deliberation properly construed but of something else, which one might call "discussion." Manin similarly points out that the main difference between groups that tend to polarize like those observed by Sunstein and groups that tend not to, like the citizens' jury studied by Goodin and Niemeyer or the members of James Fishkin's deliberative polls, is that the former groups did not seem to properly take into consideration conflicting views. Manin further insists that, contrary to what many authors besides Sunstein emphasize (e.g., Bohman 2007), diversity of views is not enough since even people with different perspectives may fail to engage each other's arguments in the kind of adversarial manner

conducive to epistemically satisfying deliberation (Manin 2005: 9). The key is not to have just diverse arguments, but arguments that respond to each other in critical, even conflicting ways.

Sunstein sometimes calls exchanges among like-minded people "enclave deliberation" (after Mansbridge 1994). Yet, even among like-minded people, there is a difference between an argumentative exchange, that is, an exchange that genuinely pits arguments against each other and an exchange of diverse and yet self-reinforcing views. The focus on the fact that people share the same initial views is slightly misleading in that it is not so much the starting point of the deliberation that matters, as the fact that the exchanges are truly deliberative and based on arguments that oppose each other. The same way that individuals can make an effort to consider different viewpoints internally, like-minded groups should be able to take into account perspectives beyond those represented in the group. Not all like-minded groups, no more than individuals, are bound to polarize. The advantage of a group over an individual, however, is that the greater the number of people in the group, the less likely it is that they are all perfectly like-minded, hence increasing the chances that a genuinely conflicting perspective can trigger genuine deliberation.

If we consider only the cases where deliberation as we defined it is at play, rather than any form of discussion, the results are much more positive. As we emphasized in the definition above, several conditions have to be met for a discursive exchange to count as deliberative. In particular, arguments between several points of views have to be debated. When this is the case, deliberation does tend to produce good reasoning, which in turn produces good outcomes, in terms of improving beliefs and related conclusions

(see Mercier and Sperber, In Press for a review). For instance, when people have different opinions on questions about which there exists a factual answer, deliberation improves performances, sometimes dramatically (e.g., Sniezek and Henry 1989). This also applies when there is no strictly superior answer but one can distinguish between better and worse arguments offered in support of a given alternative (e.g., Laughlin, Bonner and Miner 2002). The good performance of reasoning in context of genuine deliberation is also supported by a large quantity of studies on team work in the workplace and at school (Michaelsen et al 1989; and Slavin 1996). Finally, evidence of good performance has been found in studies of deliberating citizens, in the context of deliberative polls, citizens' juries, consensus conferences and even hybrid forums which mix both regular citizens and experts (e.g., Fishkin 2009). In those cases, there is no right or wrong answer a priori identifiable or knowable but one can use as a proxy the general consensus of observers of those experiments, including experts. This general consensus is that the deliberating groups of citizens ended up with more informed beliefs and, where relevant, compelling policy proposals.[20] All in all, these results seem to indicate that in politics as in other areas, group reasoning—that is individual reasoning practiced in the context of an argument with others—yields very good results that often surpass those produced by the solitary mind.

In our view, therefore, not all groups of like-minded people are doomed to polarize, provided they contain at least some dissenting individuals and make an effort to take their arguments seriously, that is make an effort to reason as opposed to let their

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[20] Gerry Mackie provides an important methodological caveat for these studies. He notes the effects of deliberation are "typically latent, indirect, delayed, or disguised" (Mackie 2006: 279), and that therefore some studies may fail to observe them even though they are real. This argument therefore strengthens any positive results actually obtained.

confirmation bias run unchecked and produce only arguments for the side they already favor. In other words, it is not always a problem that a group of people about to deliberate start with a lot of shared views. After all those views might be the right ones! The problem is when people share the same opinions and make no effort to test them against opposing views.

If groups of like-minded people need not polarize, conversely, it might not be enough to diversify the pool of arguments to prevent polarization. We thus disagree with Sunstein when he advocates full-information as the main solution to group polarization. In order to thwart the limited pool of arguments mechanism, Sunstein indeed suggests that "[p]erhaps group polarization could be reduced or even eliminated if we emphasized that good deliberation has full information as a precondition" (Sunstein 2000: 28). By full information, Sunstein means knowledge of all the relevant facts, values, options and arguments that may affect a decision. Playing with the thought experiment of a deliberating body consisting of all citizens in the relevant group, whether a community, a nation, a state, or the whole world, as opposed to just a subset of them, Sunstein emphasizes that the main advantage of such a setting is "the argument pool would be very large" (Sunstein 2000: 27). While Sunstein does not think that such an all inclusive deliberating body would be ideal—social influences may remain, biases too—his suggestion is that at least it would "remove some of the distortions in the group polarization experiments, where generally like-minded people, not exposed to others, shift in large part because of that limited exposure." Sunstein then returns to the same conclusion that full information about both facts and values and a wide mix of competing views, as is usually ensured by the existence of a vibrant "public sphere" are probably the

best antidote to polarization (Sunstein 2000: 30).

As Sunstein acknowledges himself, though, full information is a daunting requirement. In practice, not everybody can have all the necessary information before starting to deliberate. Not only is full information a daunting requirement but it would not be sufficient to ensure sound epistemic outcomes. Even if all the information were already available and the arguments at hand, there is still need to talk things out with other. Here we strongly disagree with Sunstein's claim that "if there is already full information, the point of deliberation is greatly reduced" (Sunstein 2000: 27).[21]

According to the argumentative theory, the participants' biases are likely to play a much more important role than the initial distribution of information. As already said, even full information cannot guarantee a balanced outcome if everybody agrees on the issue to start with: each individual's confirmation bias is likely to make for a biased discussion in any case. But this confirmation bias can also be put to good use. When group members disagree, they will still be more likely to find arguments for their own side of the issue. But the consequences of this bias can then be positive: it guarantees a more exhaustive exposition to the arguments supporting the different sides of an issue. As a bonus, there is no need for full information prior to the debate: full (or at least, more complete) information is precisely one of the main achievements of the debate. In such a case, far from being a nuisance, the confirmation bias becomes a form of division of cognitive labor.

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[21] In a footnote to this passage (footnote 120), Sunstein suggests that there would still be a residual value to deliberation, consisting in addressing « the question of what to do, given a certain understanding of the facts. » This is a strange precision, since it seems to contradict the very suggestion that the role of deliberation would be « greatly reduced » in presence of full information. Unless Sunstein wants to imply that deliberating about what to do given the facts is not as important and/or time-consuming a task as gathering factual information ? In any case, in our view, deliberation is not only essential to dealing with the moral components of group decisions, but also to operationalize the existing factual information.

There is of course something right about Sunstein's claim that more diversity of competing viewpoints is a good thing for the quality of democratic deliberation. But that is not enough. What we need is not just diversity of inputs, or informational diversity, but an actual deliberation built on this informational diversity. In other words, to be truly effective, informational diversity must be used in deliberative exchanges, that is exchanges in which one piece of information or argument is taken as the starting point of another argument for or against it. Depolarization can occur even if the pool of arguments and information is far from exhaustive or falls short of Sunstein's requirement of "full information." Of course, if information—the argument pool—is too limited and too biased, deliberation based on it won't do miracles. But between the extremes of seriously limited and biased information on the one hand and full information on the other, there is a space in which deliberation can have transformative and epistemic properties, even among initially like-minded people. In other words, it is not enough, it is not perhaps even necessary to ensure that people in the group hold different views from the get-go. One must more crucially ensure that they engage in the sort of deliberative exchange that can even produce correct arguments when those are missing or go unacknowledged. In other words, one should focus on the process of deliberation, rather than on its input only.

We certainly side with Sunstein's diagnostic that an important problem of the deliberating groups that he observes is their too great social homogeneity. As he remarks, "one of the principal lessons of the group polarization phenomenon is to cast new light on an old point, to the effect that social homogeneity can be quite damaging to good deliberation. … To work well, deliberating groups should be appropriately heterogeneous and should contain a plurality of articulate people with reasonable views…" (Sunstein

2000: 4). By the end of his article, though, Sunstein has gradually moved away from the problem of social homogeneity to the more fundamental problem, in our view, of a genuine consideration for opposite arguments. We would like to take up and emphasize that point, which we think is not sufficiently addressed by Sunstein. The point is that in the end it would not matter that much if a deliberating group were made up only of lawyers or men or white people or well-to-do people if those were not also more likely to argue along the same lines or for the same things. In our view, the real reason to include all the members in the group in the thought-experiment proposed by Sunstein of an all-inclusive deliberating group, is that we are more likely to obtain arguments opposing the dominant view that way than through any other means. Unlike social heterogeneity, indeed, oppositions of points of views and arguments cannot be easily identified prior to actual deliberation so that it becomes impossible to try and a priori select the "right" social mix that would ensure the relevant opposition of arguments.

Our theory of reasoning as arguing thus predicts that only discussions among like-minded people that do not involve a proper weighing of the pros and cons will lead to polarization, but not necessarily discussion among people who start with the same information and argument pool but engage in proper deliberation, even on a skewed informational basis.

Conclusion

The argumentative theory of reasoning presented in this paper yields predictions regarding the transformative properties of deliberation that should give pause to the advocates of "deliberation within" and heart to the advocates of external deliberation.

The argumentative theory of reasoning allows us to predict where deliberation will work well—in contexts that fulfill or approximate the normal circumstances for which it was designed, i.e., deliberative contexts—and when it will not—in abnormal contexts, i.e., solitary reasoning or certain types of collective deliberation among like-minded people.

Most importantly for deliberative democrats, if the theory of reasoning as having primarily a social function of conviction and evaluation of other people's claims is correct, combined with assumptions about the way confirmation biases tend to cancel out in diverse groups, it lends plausibility to the claim implicit in the normative ideal of many deliberative democrats and the explicit claim of many epistemic democrats that deliberation with others has more epistemic virtues than reasoning on one's own.[22]

Finally, the argumentative theory of reasoning also suggests that there is nothing utopian about the demands placed by deliberative democrats on individual reasoning. In its normal, dialogical context, reasoning will do well what it is supposed to do and the confirmation bias is actually harnessed to epistemic benefits. There is no need to deplore the limitations of individual reasoning or try to fix them. What matters is to set up the optimal conditions for it: genuine deliberation with others.

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[22] Of course, talking things out with others does not require talking things out with everyone in the group. Thus, while it supports deliberation with at least one other person, the argumentative theory of reasoning need not support properly "democratic" deliberation, in the sense of deliberation inclusive of all members of a given group. However, if we assume that more people mean a greater variety of opinions, trigerring different confirmation biases, and evaluative abilities, the theory lends plausibility to the claim put forward by some epistemic democrats (Landemore 2010 and 2011) that deliberation is more epistemically fruitful as it becomes more inclusive. It is true that, even then, the theory might not support including everyone past a certain threshold, given that deliberation as we define it does not seem possible beyond a relatively small number of participants. Much more would thus need to be said to support the case for not just external deliberation but specifically all inclusive, properly democratic deliberation. That, however, will be the object of another paper.

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