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TOWARD ROBUST PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT: THE VALUE OF DELIBERATIVE DISCOURSE FOR CIVIL COMMUNICATION

DON WAISANEN

This article explores questions about “civility” in the 2012 election. Through an analysis of media discussions raising the term, four themes are constructed focusing on the limitations of civility discourse. While seeking to preserve the best that civil orientations afford, I argue that adding a deliberative approach to such discourse addresses moments when civil appeals appear to be most limited. This essay finds that working between civil and deliberative constructs provides an instructive perspective for understanding the workings of and possibilities for public discourse during situations when civility rhetoric is typically raised. Relative to civil communication—and associated concepts such as dialogue and advocacy—specific norms, benefits, examples, and implications of a deliberative rhetorical vision are charted for problem-solving, public policy contexts.

Civility is an important concept for public discourse. Few would want less rather than more civility in their interactions with others, and to some extent, the very viability of public discourse could be said to depend upon how such interactions take place. As Sigmund Freud once stated, the idea that “civilization began the first time an angry person...
cast a word instead of a rock" surely resonates with anyone who has faced
the pressures of physical or verbal assault.\textsuperscript{1} Robert Ivie similarly holds that
“when politics reduces to hostility and contestation degenerates into war­
fare against an evil or otherwise dehumanized and despised internal and/or
external enemy, democracy is lost.”\textsuperscript{2} In one of the most methodical defenses
of the topic to date, Stephen Carter defined civility as “the sum of the many
sacrifices we are called to make for the sake of living together,”\textsuperscript{3} which
connects with the interests of rhetorical scholars exploring how certain
forms of discourse can either advance or undermine democratic engage­
ment under conditions of disagreement and difference.

In this spirit, there is much worth preserving about civility. If politics is
about how people come together to address the challenges of communities
and societies, the chief value of civil communication appears to lie in its
common associations with respect. In public contexts, where there will
always be deep differences about how to engage political questions, individ­
uals have to communicate some degree of respect for others whose beliefs,
values, or attitudes do not match their own to establish some grounds for
problem-solving collaboration. With respect comes a recognition that there
are others whose lives, needs, and well-being are implicated with one’s own,
and that in public settings, diverse messages and standards deserve spaces
for expression. Without such respect, communicators run the risk of as­
suming their messages about politics can speak for everyone’s demands, a
task they surely cannot. Between respect and civic demands, I contend, we
thus find civility: not simply respect for respect’s sake, but expressions that
others are valued amid disagreements over pressing social issues.

While recognizing civility’s importance to public affairs, however, any
detailed investigation of the topic soon runs into a rather sordid back­
ground. Over 40 years ago, Robert L. Scott and Donald K. Smith outlined
how “a rhetorical theory suitable to our age must take into account the
charge that civility and decorum serve as masks for the preservation of
injustice, that they condemn the dispossessed to non-being” and can “be­
come the instrumentalities of power for those who have.”\textsuperscript{4} In other words,
any serious analysis of civility must also theorize how it can be used as a
weapon, particularly when equated with universalizing, uniform standards
of interaction that everyone is expected to follow under all circumstances,
ignoring unequal relations of power, forms of appeal, and the differing
communication styles made available to and expressed by those of varying backgrounds, cultures, and belief systems.

Surveying Mississippi slave owners’ use of civility to resist challenge, for example, Raymie McKerrow argued that civility has historically served to perpetuate systems of oppression. In particular, mannered expressions between slave owners and slaves merely reinforced forms of social engagement sanctioned and defined by those in power, doing little to change deep inequalities or the acceptance of “cultural other[s].” McKerrow concludes that pleas to “just get along” are hence insufficient for the kinds of complex social issues with which modern societies are confronted. Exploring civility during the Renaissance, Charles Taylor similarly demonstrated how notions of “civilization” were used by those in power to claim it was something they had and others did not. Differences between elites and “savages” were generated through tame/wild and culture/nature binaries, with civility and ethnocentrism working side by side. Analyses of civility’s role in gender oppression, especially in depictions of women “as less civilized than men,” in racial subjugation, and in muting protestor’s demands by framing them as “out of control” have been further covered by other scholars.

Given these problems, a critical tension has developed in rhetorical scholarship over how rhetors should approach one another in the public arena. Nina Lozano-Reich and Dana Cloud contend that as much as civility may be called for, an “uncivil tongue” is necessary to liberate individuals and groups who are not on an equal playing field of discussion. Responding to Sonja Foss and Cindy Griffin’s and Jennifer Bone, Cindy Griffin, and Linda Scholz’s proposals for “invitational rhetoric”—a paradigm constructed from feminist literatures arguing for nonconfrontational dialogue rather than more direct efforts at persuasion—Lozano-Reich and Cloud argue that civil discussion “presupposes conditions of economic, political, and social equality among interlocutors” that are rare in everyday practice. They find the powerful have little incentive for inviting the less powerful to such discussions, so justice and equality tend to be advanced more by efforts at overt persuasion and explicit actions such as protests. Both sides appear to agree about the types of actions that constitute invitational, civil discourse (respectful words and gestures, for example) and underscore that civility is only one among many options in public discourse. But they each place different value upon the extent to which civil approaches can and should meet practical political demands. In particular,
a core concern is whether respectful dialogue or boisterous advocacy in pursuit of material social change should be the "desired ends of rhetorical engagement."  

Working between these lines, rhetorical scholars have examined other times when exclusive concerns for civility have left political discourse impoverished. Christie Hurrell argues that "civil dialogue alone cannot ensure effective communication between governments and citizens."  

Christopher Darr finds "civil rationality" a U.S. Senate norm that "reveals a particular notion of argumentation that is impersonal and void of intense emotion," marginalizing "the role of character, ethics, and emotion, which can be vital in such debates," and that might make for broader, more accessible forms of public communication. Continuing scholarship has engaged the question of whether polite engagement or rowdier forms of communication are generally best for democracy, with Thomas Benson concluding that, "civility and incivility are communicative, rhetorical practices. As such, they are always situational and contestable."  

To move these discussions forward, I examine recent media examples of civility rhetoric to tease out the types of meanings and connections public figures have drawn in their own use of the concept. This analysis will highlight the complexities of civil communication to demonstrate the worth a deliberative approach could offer such constructions. I will argue that a deliberative approach to public affairs offers the possibility of improving concerns for civil discourse itself. While seeking to preserve the best that civil orientations afford, working between civil and deliberative constructs generally provides an instructive perspective for understanding the workings of and possibilities for public discourse during moments when civility rhetoric is typically raised. Relative to civil communication—and associated concepts such as dialogue and advocacy—specific norms, benefits, examples, and implications of a deliberative rhetorical vision are charted for problem-solving, public policy contexts.

**MEDIA DISCOURSE IN THE 2012 ELECTION**

In addition to exploring many journalistic reports, videos, and web messages from the 2012 election cycle, the author gathered systematic media data to capture a glimpse of the types of meanings in context(s) when commentators and advocates used the term "civility." Following Sarah
Sobieraj and Jeffrey Berry, who find that in political communication studies of civility/incivility, "the effects research exists alongside minimal data on the content of real political discourse," a close reading of texts was conducted. Per Edward Schiappa's insights, moreover, the analysis focused less upon "the" definition of "civility" than the meanings and purposes rhetors attached to the term. A *Lexis-Nexis* search of all Broadcast Transcripts with the term "civility" from July 1 to December 31, 2012, was used to identify how the term was discussed in the buildup to and aftermath of the election.

To create a manageable scope (from 657 documents), the search focused on major U.S. news show transcripts like *CNN* and *Fox News*, which produced 1,551 pages with over 203 instances of the word "civility" (133 transcripts total). "Civility" was mostly employed by *Fox News* (48 transcripts); *CNN* came in second (29), and *MSNBC* third (19), with other networks like *CBS* and *ABC* following behind. Using Kenneth Burke's advice to trace words across a range of works and to look for "what goes with what" and "what is vs. what," four aspects of "civility" emerged from the media transcripts, each of which assigns progressively less value to the concept.

**Confusing Terms**

First, media discourse during the election highlighted much variance in the language around and about civility. As might be imagined, many pundits and interlocutors used terms such as "tone," "deference," "cordiality," "conduct," "respect," and "manners" in the context of "civility." But it was also positioned with self-deprecating humor, "compassion," and being friendly and "emotional." There was a reference to "humbility," and even "toughness with a smile" in the transcripts. The term was sometimes connected to more extreme, potential threats of violence, particularly in the context of 2012 U.S. shootings, violence against cops, and as the opposite of, using a militant verbal antonym, "sniping."

The author conducted an additional *Lexis-Nexis* search of major U.S. newspapers during the election, and used the software program *Concordance* to highlight statistical counts of each of the four words to both the left and right of the term "civility" across the papers (379 uses of the word were
This separate analysis further confirmed a notable diversity of concepts used in conjunction with the word. The significance of confusion over what civility may mean partly lies in the term’s instability in practice; that is, in how rhetors bypassed the different associations and purposes to which the term was put, potentially leaving citizens with little clarity about the term’s usefulness for public engagement. But a confusing irony also emerged in how media commentators raised civility in discussions of what better public engagement could look like while characterizing the concept as too limited or incomplete to help with such expectations.

Some rhetors distinguished civility from constructs like “compromise,” but left the potential relationship between these kinds of terms open-ended. One show covered what was described as Republican vice-presidential candidate Paul Ryan’s “Midwestern nice” political style and mixed voting record in Congress. In response to Ryan’s demeanor and record, the program cut to a clip of Congressman Chris Van Hollen (D-MD) stating, “let’s not confuse civility with a willingness to compromise,” before quickly moving on to another show segment. Beyond the question of how terms like “compromise” might relate to civility, Van Hollen promoted a sense that civility by itself is too weak to sustain a robust public discourse. That audiences could become “confuse[d]” by the invocation of “civility” when questions of compromise were at issue suggests that civil communication alone was seen as somehow too limited for this situation.

On a brighter note, commentators like Mickey Edwards pleaded that “we have got to create incentives for civility, incentives for compromise, incentives to listen to each other and to sit down together.” Both civility and compromise are clearly valued in such statements, but further ways in which these concepts could relate also begged further insight. For instance, does civil communication require that one engage in compromises or, at a minimum, simply be ready to compromise at any point during discussions? And could civility ever require that one keep compromises to a minimum, say, to move an important, ethical cause forward? Media interlocutors raised a number of terms like compromise with civility, but in a relatively unexamined fashion that left viewers with some potentially confusing rhetorical tensions.

Similarly, rhetors used civility with concepts like “partisanship” across the transcripts. One commentator said that “one of the things that polls have showed is that people are really sick of partisanship and incivility in
Washington." In a reverse construction, a CNN chief White House correspondent urged that politics needs more civility and "bipartisanship." Both examples situate civility with terms of political moderation, apparently excluding an option that one could be both civil and highly partisan in public discourse. Overall, civility is constructed as needing another concept to fulfill its political potential and as possibly too weak to be sustained in the midst of vehement advocacy.

Geoffrey Nunberg may have best captured the potentially confusing ways in which civility rhetoric can be used in remarking that "it’s better to look at the word that we use in our daily lives to react to incivility and that reflects our genuine attitudes without being contaminated by all the pontification that a word like civility can evoke." Although Nunberg misses civility’s virtues, such a charge evidences some desire to moor the concept with firmer grounding than public discourse appears to have, at times, made available.

Finally, the relationship between civility and reason emerged as another confusing point across the transcripts. Whether civility is exclusively a matter of tone or shares some type of important connection with reason invited further inquiry. These two concepts were further focused by the next issue.

**Substantive Divisions**

Commentators and advocates frequently conceived of civility and "reason/substance" as separate issues across the transcripts. Covering the vice-presidential debate, Jelani Cobb on MSNBC noted that "if you get past the issue of the civility and we get past the snickering and those kinds of things, Joe Biden was far and away more substantive." Cobb made civility and substantive points separate issues, with civility as a dissociated appearance divided from real reasons or reasoning. President Obama even seemed to loosely divide the two concepts: "I think that over time, people respond to civility and rational argument." In such cases, civility is seen as vital to the political process, but is either subordinated or separated from substantive argumentation—reducing civility to merely gestural or behavioral niceties. Like the confusing terms with which civility rhetoric can be invoked, divisions from substance highlight how commentators consider civility important but also lacking without other concepts.
In the transcripts, a division between civility and reason/substance even appeared to prevent debate. In a story easily missed during the election, Pastor Rick Warren of Saddleback Church in Southern California—who held a civility forum between John McCain and Barack Obama in 2008—decided to not provide the same opportunity between Obama and Romney in 2012, “citing nasty campaign rhetoric. Warren says he’s never seen more irresponsible personal attacks and mean-spirited slander.” While Warren clarified that he did not think it would be fitting to be “civil temporarily” in such an environment, more remarkably, a focus on civility obscured a need to talk, even about civility in the election itself. Where civility is seen as too weak to carry a robust public discourse in other examples, Warren enacts an opposite consideration: incivility is constructed as too strong or excessive for viable communication, creating a rhetorical overflow that surpasses the possibility for substance and reasoning. Rhetors hence leveraged civil or uncivil terms as weak or dangerous to divide the concept from substantive issues.

The results demonstrated that the word “civility” emerged the most across the Fox News transcripts and largely from pundit Sean Hannity. Since the Obama administration has frequently used the term in support of its policies, this finding may simply be a result of the network’s typical commitment to oppose the president’s rhetoric at every turn. In a media environment committed to such high percentages of opinion programming, however, a rhetoric that persistently implies commentators are “substantive” could also function to create an impression that the network is conducting credible journalism.

When a Democratic strategist raised the point that a much maligned figure in the national news had handled the controversy “with dignity and grace,” Hannity quickly opined, “but the foundation of what she said was false,” raising a tension between tonal performance and substantive rhetoric. Hannity’s use of the term “foundation” is instructive, in this regard, situating substance/reason as not only separate from considerations of civility, but as vertically deeper and hence more important than the implied shallower, surface-level horizon of civil communication. In a similar show segment, Hannity urged former Alaskan governor Sarah Palin to break down Joe Biden’s vice-presidential debate performance. Palin stated Biden’s “inciting-type rhetoric” would not appeal to “those who are rational American voters just wanting to deal with facts and [the] true state of the
union.” Implicitly, Palin draws a similar distinction between Biden’s uncivil, “inciting” style and substantive facts/policies to argue that he has failed on both counts, making civility only a matter of style or tone.

**Fake Civility**

Related to the last point, beyond constructing civility as merely stylistic, the transcripts evidenced the use of civility as “fake.” Rhetors constructed the concept as either an unreal tactic or unreflective, emotional impulse that others use to cover for a lack of “real” understanding. Reacting to pundit Sam Donaldson’s reflections on how Barack Obama won the election, conservative Michelle Malkin stated: “There he goes. The new tone and civility, I think he has been living in the D.C. bubble way too long and probably hitting the sauce too much.” Malkin implies that Donaldson’s “tone and civility” are a part of an unreal “D.C. bubble,” where mainstream, liberal journalists are unreflectively civil but misguided. The trope of “hitting the sauce” (a colloquial reference to drinking too much alcohol) reinforces a sense that calls to civility are being made in an unthinking haze that masks important political realities. Relative to the confusing terms and substantive divisions identified in this analysis, where many rhetors still tended to see civility as important, here civility becomes merely a worthless, mystifying tactic.

Malkin further charged the White House with issuing “all of these lofty edicts about civility and coming together” to place a veil over its machinations with big labor. Under these terms, Malkin constructs calls for civility as a false means for procuring political advantages, and as an approach to avoid due to its potential for chicanery. At the same time, asserting “fake civility” represents the person making this charge as in control of a “real,” uniform standard of interaction. Although there is a possibility that media commentators are simply viewing differing communication styles or forms of appeal than they are used to or would choose themselves, comments about fake civility function to cast them as bearers of universally “real” and hence “right” standards of interaction, reducing varying expressions of civility to a correct or incorrect, totalizing type of performance.

In essence, such comments strikingly imply that offers of civility are their very opposite: civility cannot be trusted given its masking function and link
with a fake/real binary. Covering the first presidential debate, Chris Matthews pronounced that "Romney, with all this cordiality and phony civility, talked to [Obama] like a lesser being and that drove the president crazy." As demonstrated by commentators on both the political left and right, this type of fake/real rhetoric fostered a speculative focus upon individual candidates' performances and motives, with MSNBC's Rachel Maddow also remaining concerned about the "fake civility" and "phony" behaviors between the candidates. Pundits did not remark on how they made such calculations of fakery, however, characterizing civility's worthlessness and opponents' motives as largely self-evident. Seeing civility in terms of such fakery further illustrates the confusing terms with which rhetors used the concept. Where civility sometimes meant genuine gestures of appreciation, these examples focused upon civility as exclusively inauthentic.

Along these lines, Palin engaged fake civility charges more implicitly in stating that "when I hear Barack Obama speak about ethics and civility, it's nauseating to me." Constructing civility as fake communication, Hannity was equally fond of labeling Obama "President Civility," a satirical moniker underscoring the extent to which the president's calls for civility were seen as bogus and never "real." Yet the questions might be asked: are all discussions of ethics and civility by political figures one opposes simply unreal masks, as such comments appear to presume? At what threshold are media commentators able to decide that talks of ethics and civility are not really about ethics and civility?

One standard of "inconsistency" was applied when Hannity argued that Obama tended to do nothing in the face of "violence"; for example, during the Occupy Wall Street movement's clashes with police. Hannity implied that Obama was inconsistent in not making a statement about these matters and hence did not really care about civility. As a means of intervening into and parsing out civility rhetoric's complexities, however, inconsistency seems unable to help Hannity and others distinguish between moments when civility should and should not be used—a point further focused by the next finding.

**Rhetorical Weaponry**

A final theme emerged in the transcripts, namely, commentators' charges that "civility" is merely a weapon used to shut down speech or put others in
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losing positions. An election discussion between John Stossel and Bill O'Reilly about a University of North Carolina campus speech code highlighted this issue:

Stossel: But when you have all these rules and they have a civility code which would ban you, then, what it means is they use them to punish people they don't like. And those are usually people like you.

O'Reilly: Tell me about the Civility Code at the University of North Carolina

Stossel: All speech must be civil. And, you know, that feels right. Why not have a nice speech? But the Civil Rights Movement and the protests sitting in a lunch hall and refusing to leave on a lunch counter because they're racist, it's important not to be civil all the time.

O'Reilly: So, if I go down there and I call somebody a "pinhead," am I arrested by the campus police?

Stossel: You, according to their code, would be kicked out of school.

O'Reilly: Is that right. Wow.

Rather than describing civility as a mechanism for inviting discourse, oppositely, O'Reilly and Stossel's conversation centers upon civility as a means of narrowing public speech to exclude disagreements. Stossel's odd example of the civil rights movement (which leaves aside the movement's strategic "nonviolence" and "civil disobedience") and O'Reilly's point about calling someone a "pinhead" also assumes incivility is sometimes useful, a point begging a better understanding of when and why civility should and should not be used. More so, Stossel uses a dodging rhetoric in this construction, asserting that civility codes uncivilly overreach by excluding disagreeable forms of communication from debate—but Stossel also bypasses the social problems or substance/reasons intended to be highlighted through such codes. Different than the confusing terms and substantive divisions, where commentators typically positioned civility with or against other terms in efforts to distinguish but retain some of its value, civility needs little saving when framed as either fakery or a damaging weapon.

Through these episodes, pundits characterized civility as a rhetorical tool that "they" use against "us," paradoxically to position one's own cause as superior. A sense of being a victim informs such exchanges, so that Stossel, O'Reilly, and those they purport to represent can be seen as swimming
upstream in the culture, regardless of their elite positions. In claiming this beleaguered status, the rhetoric functions to assert an oppression justifying the use of uncivil discourse, to associate one’s cause with well-regarded, marginalized communities (in this case, the Civil Rights Movement), and to invite sympathizing audiences to become more politically active in a battle where apparently innocuous concepts like civility come loaded with strategic manipulation. In a similar conversation with Newt Gingrich, Hannity rebuked the mainstream press for not covering the incivility of leftists. Hannity and Gingrich implied that the very absence of attention to incivility was an indictment against liberal media coverage about the issue of civility itself. Many of these claims added up to the charge that others are really uncivil in the way that they use civility, calling into question the construct’s value for public discourse.

Yet calls for civility equally became a device for discussants to steer conversations away from actually talking about the particular issue(s) at hand. In another election period story, the owner of the Chick-fil-A restaurant chain ignited a national controversy through remarks about gay marriage. Discussing the debate, one media interlocutor asked another: “can we not have some civility about someone having an opinion? And by the way, it’s OK for you to disagree with whoever.” In such remarks, one person perceives another as shutting down debate through civil freedoms that are not offered to him or herself. In making this rhetorical move, however, the same advocate uses civility as a means of both minimizing another’s claims and diverting the discussion away from how such opinions were formed in the first place, creating stopping points for further communication.

THE VALUE OF “DELIBERATIVE” DISCOURSE FOR CIVIL COMMUNICATION

The preceding analysis provides a small window into some unacknowledged tensions in the practice of civility rhetoric. Such discourses may certainly highlight examples of unwarranted rudeness, or of civility as a useful ideal and working standard. But media advocates often put civility rhetoric to oppressive work in, for instance, using the concept as a type of ad hominem attack, where one gains by attacking others’ civility rather than the issues presented. At times, the often confused and unreflective dealings of media commentaries covering civility issues thus skirt more productive,
robust understandings of what might be possible for public reasoning and reasonability. In this spirit, while retaining the best that civility offers, there are distinct advantages to adding a “deliberative” approach to concerns for civil communication. By making manifest how our understandings of the types of issues often raised by civility can be addressed through general and specific deliberative approaches, this section works toward a fuller framework for civil public engagement. Ultimately, moving between civil and deliberative approaches offers stronger conceptions for what more democratic forms of communication could look like.

**DELIBERATIVE: A GENERAL APPROACH**

To work between civil and deliberative communication, this section constructs a general definition of “deliberative” discourse. To do so, I must first turn to what others have meant by the concept. The idea that dialogue and civility share some kind of relationship has been articulated by others. Carter’s remark that “anything that interferes with dialogue is bad for civility” draws a relationship between these two notions. Yet, as noted from the previous analysis and prior research, sometimes civility rhetoric can be a way of interfering with dialogue. Others have provided closer bridges between civility and dialogue, with Ronald Arnett explicitly constructing “dialogic civility” as “an interpersonal metaphor grounded in the public domain and in a pragmatic commitment to keeping the conversation going in a time of narrative confusion and virtue fragmentation.” Note the feature of “keeping the conversation going,” a sentiment echoed in W. Barnett Pearce and Kim Pearce’s normative construction of “dialogic virtuosity,” a type of communication “that enable[s] people to speak so that others can and will listen, and to listen so that others can and will speak.”

In theory and practice, finer distinctions have been drawn between concepts like “dialogue” and “deliberation.” The National Coalition for Dialogue and Deliberation underscores how both constructs engage needs for social or material change, but dialogue typically involves a small-group process of simply sharing perspectives or experiences about issues that are difficult to discuss (such as racial inequity or gay marriage), with a goal of learning and understanding rather than argument or consensus.
other hand, deliberation typically has more of a public, instrumental focus, with participants sharing and exploring options to make decisions over pressing issues. Both dialogue and deliberation attend to constructing useful norms for engagement, needs for inclusion and equality, expanding grounds for discussion, and "building civic capacity," however.\(^{59}\)

There is a burgeoning interdisciplinary literature on deliberative democracy, although "deliberative" is still not a term much used in U.S. public culture. Scholars typically associate deliberation with problem-solving, especially where a variety of perspectives and positions exist on a public policy issue. Discussions of deliberative democracy raise the ongoing project(s) of Jürgen Habermas and his scholarly following to construct and advance open, reasoned communication norms and forms of argument fitting for a democratic politics, while critiquing the forces working "to depoliticize public communication" in and across societies.\(^{60}\)

Some examples from this line of inquiry include the ways in which personal or technical arguments can be used to forgo or extend public communication practices, the constraints that the form or content of political language place upon deliberative ideals, the styles or setups of particular forums, or analyses of how some historical events have contributed to the loss of deliberative practices.\(^{61}\) Overall, the quest to advance better norms for deliberation is an evolving project, with varying research lines advocating for more cosmopolitan practices or forms of "transcendent eloquence" that are contextually sensitive.\(^{62}\) Overall, deliberative democracy scholars focus on "what putting [deliberation] into practice would mean, or how it is possible under the social conditions of pluralistic and complex societies."\(^{63}\) Rhetorical theorists have aligned themselves with this project, with a goal of "equip[ping] democratic citizens to become better rhetoricians" to promote more intersubjective and liberatory conditions for communication.\(^{64}\)

In general, public deliberation has been defined as "debate and discussion aimed at producing reasonable, well-informed opinions in which participants are willing to revise preferences in light of discussion, new information, and claims made by fellow participants."\(^{65}\) It is "an unconstrained exchange of arguments that involves practical reasoning and always potentially leads to a transformation of preferences."\(^{66}\) As such, scholars have emphasized both a continual openness to others and a willingness to revise one's own positions as critical to deliberative approaches.
Robert Asen adds the idea that "deliberation entails a meta-level of critical reflection that promotes perspective-taking, which is a form of recognizing difference." 67 The taking in of others' perspectives and ability to work with difference play key roles in deliberation. In what may be the most important consideration, however, engaging in deliberative discourse means remaining keenly attuned to how "an advocate's discourse implicitly or explicitly widens or narrows discursive space for others." 68 In other words, like Habermas’s concern for highlighting norms that advance or detract from reason and reasonability in society, deliberative discourse manifests a continual concern for how and when space is opened and closed for others in acts of communication. Deliberative communication constitutes the kind of "rhetorical culture" Thomas Farrell characterized as "an institutional formation in which [the] motives of competing parties are intelligible, audiences available, expressions reciprocal, norms translatable, and silences noticeable," 69 underscoring additional concerns for making discussions equal, accessible, and attentive to power relations.

Out of this background (and for reasons of parsimony), I will define being "deliberative" generally as making broadly informed judgments with an unending openness to others' communication when evaluating different perspectives and positions oriented toward a public policy problem. Beyond being civil, engaging in deliberative discourse recognizes how communication acts to open and close space for further communication. For example, an individual could be very passionate about a cause like gun control, but still open to others' communication. Given the information that this individual has taken in to this point in life, he or she may make a policy argument such as "the federal government should create a law banning assault weapons." In coming to this conclusion, this person narrows communicative space to make a judgment; she or he is no longer searching for answers and is at a decision point. But if this judgment is made with the idea that others' communication could still impact her or his belief(s) about the policy problem, we could say that this individual is engaging in "deliberative" discourse. Given what is thought to be an overwhelming accumulation of evidence in support of this policy conclusion, passionate, even angry arguments or ways of arguing could still be warranted, so long as this person maintains some space for others' points of view. This rhetorical theory accounts both for the processes and products of communication, constructing room for vigorous, expansive deliberation and decided advocacy—
never losing sight of both but always leaving some space open for further communication to potentially alter one's positions.

Under these terms, I would suggest that one's civil behavior should be seen as an important part of this deliberative approach, or how a person is opening or closing space in and across communicative acts. Across many situations, civil communication is likely to be the best default position to open space for others and communicate one's orientation for broadly informed judgments. Yet a deliberative approach to public discourse need not be reduced to civil communication. From the preceding example, if we were to judge the angry gun control advocates' way of arguing in light of typical understandings of civility, we might be tempted to reduce this individual's communication to their tone or manner. But from a deliberative standpoint, the possibility that the anger is coming from a broadly informed judgment in accord with what that person argues they know about the issue should be noted. Space could still be left open for other, different points of view to quell that person's current, justified anger.

In this sense, being deliberative rather than simply civil would have us seriously consider all our stopping points in political matters—even the ways our characterizations of others' civility could be stopping points for communication—with both practical and ethical implications. As the rhetorical tradition has long heralded, human beings have to make practical judgments every day with less than complete information; for example, should a person choose to vote yes or no on a particular state proposition? The making of broadly informed judgments takes seriously the need for tentative conclusions in contingent political affairs, but engaging in deliberative discourse means never completely foreclosing the possibility for more communication to amend one's viewpoints. For scope, this general definition of "deliberative" discourse is being restricted to public policy contexts involving problem-solving. It could perhaps inform other domains of human experience, such as religious or interpersonal spheres; but this analysis leaves aside such applications to focus exclusively upon how deliberative communication could apply in political, problem-solving debates.

To be clear, where dialogue and deliberation are often associated with an exchange between individuals, my definition of "deliberative" intentionally focuses more on the attitudes and approaches of an individual; that is, as an orientation for making individual judgments. This definition carries an Aristotelian bent, highlighting a need for civil orators before interactive
processes. Aristotle not only cast rhetoric as a kind of individual “ability, in each [particular] case, to see the available means of persuasion,” but focused on the “deliberative speaker” who could best serve the body politic by aiming for an expansive knowledge of public issues (which relates to the “broadly informed” part of “deliberative”) and other ethical norms like “many friendships and good friendships” (which places some value upon and opens space for others with competing perspectives and positions on a problem). Similar to Aristotle’s approach, “deliberative” describes an orientation largely preceding “deliberation” as an exchange between people. For any exchange to take place, individuals have to be even marginally deliberative with one another. An interaction in which two individuals are completely closed to one another from the outset is no exchange at all.

A focus on “deliberative” discourse has the additional benefit of placing some accountability for deliberation in an individual’s discursive acts, rather than primarily positioning the loci of deliberative action outside such enactments of citizenship, say, in a forum or in social structures. This is not to downplay that certain rules or procedures for deliberation—like asking participants to sit in a circle, take turns speaking, or paraphrase one another’s arguments—could not foster deliberative orientations among individuals who initially appeared quite closed to one another. But such rules or procedures still ultimately target each individual’s assent to being more deliberative with others than might be fostered under other conditions. As an ethical matter, engaging in deliberative discourse hence recognizes that no human is a god and that all political judgments are partial and beckon accountability, points explored further in the next section.

**Deliberative: Some Specific Qualities**

To bolster the aforementioned, general definition of “deliberative,” some specific planks provide further explanation and justification for a deliberative orientation in public affairs: respecting human limitations, recognizing how one both exerts and is subject to power in acts of speaking and listening, and becoming comfortable with multiple identities in politics. As leveraged in the types of media discourses analyzed, constructions of civility have at times been too singular and minimalist to take these types of considerations into account. Each of these qualities underscores the process by which
broadly informed judgments that remain continually open to others' communication might be made when evaluating public policy problems. They are not intended to be definitive, but rather offer additional senses for how stronger conceptions of political communication could be generated by adding a "deliberative" approach to "civil" rhetoric.

Following from the preceding general definition, one specific quality of "deliberative" communication involves a respect for human limitations—or taking seriously the interpretive, linguistic, psychological, and critical reasoning problems to which human beings are prone. Deliberative individuals might maintain a sense for how the filtering aspects of human language inspire and effect action, how the problems of fallacies can hinder discussions, and more broadly, how selective one's interpretations can become, opening or closing discursive space for others' perspectives at any particular time. In the media transcripts, Senator Tom Coburn (R-OK) modeled one such deliberative moment in apologizing for some rude comments he made about fellow Senator Harry Reid (D-NV). Coburn reflected that "I always will, a little bit every now and then, make some mistakes in terms of my words," acknowledging some of his rhetorical limitations.

Without getting into the thicket of research pertaining to these matters, for now it is simply worth pointing out how much knowledge from social psychology and similar fields deals with these types of issues. Calls for civil communication warrant a broader rhetorical theory considering the problems of human processing highlighted by the confirmation bias—the tendency of humans to search for information that confirms their prior beliefs—and social judgment and similar theories. While discussing important topics like civility, media discussions tend to be completely walled off from knowledge about the limitations humans face when thinking and communicating. A definition of "deliberative" discourse focusing on opening and closing space for others assumes some capacity to make judgments without, for instance, overstating how one has come to such conclusions—with a recognition that some space for others had to be opened to make a political decision in the first place.

Along these lines, another specific quality involves recognizing how one both exerts and is subject to power in acts of speaking and listening—essentially placing attention upon how either type of communication opens or closes space for others' perspectives. Discussions about deliberative democracy have focused on the kinds of power that can and should be
afforded in public acts.\textsuperscript{76} We know that to speak is to wield a power in which others can be easily silenced. Yet listening as a deliberative capacity deserves more attention too, since Western communication research and practice has tended to emphasize speaking over listening.\textsuperscript{77} Deliberative discourse recognizes status shifts, always leaving open even the smallest of spaces for others. Such a "cognitive dedication to the word of the other demands ... a kind of inner abnegation. Without this inner renunciation the individual can only hold a dialogue with himself"—similar to what Martin Buber called an I-thou rather than I-it orientation to others.\textsuperscript{78} Power, in this regard, can be viewed as tied to choices to make communication public or private. For example, a group of environmental advocates could keep their interests (such as who their funders are) public rather than private during a debate to construct a more open, accessible, and accountable communicative space for others.

A conversation between Ed Schultz and John Nichols in the media transcripts highlighted a similar need, covering presidential candidate Mitt Romney's conference call to business leaders around the nation during the election, which urged executives to "make it very clear to your employees what you believe is in the best interest of your enterprise."\textsuperscript{79} In addition to a lack of public transparency about the organizations and interests funding such actions, Schultz and Nichols discussed the possibility that Romney's comments and the subsequent pro-Romney rallies set up by many corporate leaders around the United States were overly coercive, undermining the deliberative capacities of citizens to speak freely in their workplaces, or at least to not feel pressured by their employers to vote for a particular candidate.\textsuperscript{80}

From the general definition, a quality of deliberative communication further involves becoming comfortable with multiple identities—or the idea that one's civic identity should be a fluid construction. Much work on identity finds that human selves are "shape[d] through an ongoing process ... forming a sense of self and then expanding or correcting that sense as we meet other selves. There is no such thing as a neatly defined, once-and-for-all identity."\textsuperscript{81} In this light, the identities wagered in public affairs—Republican, Democrat, health care advocate, lobbyist—can be viewed as commitments (akin to the "broadly informed judgments" part of the general definition) subject to expansion or contraction based upon the information and experience one has taken in to that point in his or her life,
subject to further interventions (akin to the “unending openness” highlighted).

Given some popular understandings of identity, the connection between selves and more robust forms of deliberative communication could be easily misunderstood, so Neil Postman’s explanation of “role-fixation” problems may prove helpful:

We all know people who cannot transit from one semantic environment to another. Professors, for instance, are apt to remain Professors even in situations where none are required. And there are Political People who see Significance in someone’s ordering scrambled eggs. And there are Comics who are always “on.” And Moralists for whom there is no joy anywhere, only responsibility. And Cynics who will never let themselves be awed, or let anything be revered. Such people may be said to be self- or role-fixated, and, what is worse, they are apt to assert their fixation as a virtue. These people think of themselves as having strong character, but really it’s impoverished, single-dimensional, lacking the courage to try out new selves and thus grow.82

From the standpoint of public discourse, this theory of identity takes seriously one’s commitments, but also focuses on how reified selves can overly “close” space for further communication to amend and advance upon one’s prior political choices. It is equally not a call to the other extreme of purely fluid, perhaps postmodern identities. Public affairs demand that we bring our selves and judgments to public processes—for example, during an election, whether one chooses to be a Democrat, Republican, Independent, or to make more implicit choices such as “apathetic voter” or “nonparticipant,” identity choices will be made regardless.

An additional virtue of a deliberative orientation is that it should make finding common ground in political matters more likely. If an individual cultivates a solidified identity of “I’m a Republican” or “I’m a Democrat” in her or his approach to public life, a univocal, unwavering politics in which space remains closed for others seems highly probable. If this individual became more comfortable with multiple political identities, however, such as seeing themselves not only as a “Republican,” but a “sometimes Libertarian,” “parent with schoolchildren,” “consumer at a particular supermarket chain,” and “member of a particular locale,” one may start with a higher
likelihood of having common ground with others over a variety of political issues (empirical research also supports the idea that finding initial common ground is vital for social engagement). The media transcripts evidenced one such deliberative moment in Nancy Pelosi's (D-CA) argument against drastic federal tax cuts, which expanded her identity beyond "politician": "Do you have children that breathe air? Do you have grandchildren that drink water? I'm a mom and I have five kids... As a mom, I was vigilant about food safety, right moms? If you could depend on the government for one thing, it was that you had to be able to trust the water that our kids drank and the food that they ate." Becoming comfortable with multiple political identities does not guarantee that citizens will find common ground with one another, but it does highlight how public discourse that begins from broad political self-images could serve to open spaces for public communication before they are too quickly and unnecessarily narrowed.

With an understanding of identity choices as opened or closed in acts of communication, this specific quality of deliberative communication attends to constructing civic identities that are broadly informed but not necessarily bound by arguments tied to the past, present, or future. McKerrow similarly argues that the ability to see beyond the present moment is critical to democratic communication: "It is a state, not of being in but of acting out of the world, not toward any one predetermined place, but to act toward the future in a manner that preserves the ability to move beyond the lines that define one's place at any moment in time." Always leaving some space open for further communication to inform the self presents opportunities to see differences with others as points for constant learning and empathetic role-playing. It is the type of "partial cosmopolitanism" called for by Kwame Anthony Appiah, which aims both to take one's background and traditions seriously while becoming comfortable with an identity as a "citizen of the cosmos." These three qualities are intended to be heuristic, deepening a primary question for deliberative rather than exclusively civil communication: is space opened or narrowed for others in act(s) of communication? To focus on the contribution these qualities might make to civil public discourse when evaluating a policy problem, let us return to the previous example of the gun control advocate who argues that the federal government should create a law banning assault weapons. With a respect for human limitations,
this individual may realize how human beings' egos can easily get wrapped up with an issue, and how extremely insular the groups within which one might be situated have become, so that his or her justified anger should also come with some interpretive humility. This person has important contributions to make to public discourse, but she or he keeps one foot in the past and one in the possibility that present or future arguments could lead down other paths. Although angry, this person attempts to keep his or her interests public and transparent—they had a relative die in a shooting, for instance, or they come from a liberal family in which taking this position was easier than not—but still remain open to further investigation. At the same time, perhaps this person is currently in a position of power as an attorney, meaning that others’ important voices or data from different fields are yet to be considered. Given what this individual views as a massive volume of evidence supporting gun control, he or she assumes the identity “gun control advocate” (or related forms of identity), but holds this commitment as tentative to forgo making this civic self a fundamental stopping point for further communication.

Benefits

Returning to the four aspects of civility rhetoric highlighted in the media analysis, adding “deliberative” to “civil” public discourse brings several benefits more clearly into view. First, deliberative communication provides conceptual clarity for public discourse about civility. The manifold terms that are often brought to discussions of civility can be tested under a wider criterion covering the extent to which individuals make broadly informed judgments with an unending openness to others’ communication. The focus on “broadly informed” and “unending openness” highlight that communicators should approach the larger public environment as openly as possible, but also that such well-informed and open orientations can reasonably lead to relatively closed, passionate conclusions about public policy problems.

The processes by which individuals and groups make such judgments configure civil with deliberative communication—a social movement’s incivility could be productive in making a well-informed judgment about unjust economic laws, so long as some room is always left for more argu-
mentation to influence present or future choices. As such, this theory accounts for terms of compromise and partisanship in a way that some forms of civility rhetoric may not. Under these terms, being deliberative functions as a generally applicable orientation for public policy problem-solving, but also remains sensitive to the demands of particular contexts for which vigorous advocacy or other forms of communication may be appropriate. An environmental coalition holding a company accountable for dumping toxic waste near a local community should be expected to use forceful protests in pursuit of its cause; thus, the "uncivil tongue" that scholars like Lozano-Reich and Cloud call for could certainly be warranted. Yet maintaining some openness to the possibility that the movement could always be better informed about the situation still remains important. For example, perhaps the environmental coalition has been proceeding under the assumption that the whole company is at fault when the responsibility really lies with a particular manager and his team. In this light, Foss and Griffin's proposal for "invitational rhetoric" remains applicable, and could keep the movement from becoming too hermetic in its public advocacy.

Similarly, if civil rights leaders stage a sit-in to advocate for a new federal employment policy, or a health care reform group engages in a protest to reverse a state decision—both political contexts where problem-solving discourse among interlocutors appears hardly fitting—then such strategic, forceful modes of rhetoric might be expected. Protests may even be needed to garner public attention and get a problem recognized in the first place. But a deliberative orientation could still stand to inform such advocacy in the long-term by having the leaders and group remain open to the possibility that different perspectives and positions could provide alternate strategies or future outcomes. The "strange bedfellows" phenomenon, where political alliances and policy changes have been advanced by advocates who typically hold disparate positions, attests to the kind of value a broadly informed and continually open orientation could have in a range of political contexts.

Second, civility and reason may become unnecessarily dissociated, so to some degree, "deliberative" attempts to transcend such divisions—by accounting for how one's civility or incivility, reasons or lack of reasons—may open or close space for communication in public policy contexts. A broader range and repertoire of communicative acts are afforded for public rhetoric—
meeting Darrin Hicks’s challenge “to discover models of deliberative engagement that do not require that citizens discount their passions, cultural knowledge, and deeply held convictions” moving beyond the kind of minimizing civility appeals highlighted in the media analysis, which tended to construct stopping points for further communication.

Third, deliberative discourse works to circumvent potentially unproductive discussions about authenticity (or whether communicators are being fake/real). As bandied back and forth in media discourse, civility can be about another person or group’s motives, with incessant speculations about intent, self-presentation, and other factors. In addition to manner and tone, “deliberative” focuses on important elements external to individuals as well—what “broadly” outside of a person is being brought to bear on public judgments, such as facts, sources, precedents, and so on—in other words, space for what others have provided the public discourse on a topic of concern. Most “data” are simply others’ findings, and anyone unaccountable to data beyond their own may tend toward an individual or group solipsism that portends poorly for public affairs. Commentary need not focus so much on a political candidate’s smile as authentically civil or not; rather, the candidate’s viability can be assessed in terms of an overall orientation to make broad and continually open judgments accountable to further discourse, of which a smile could be considered simply one part.

Last, deliberative communication should not be reduced exclusively to someone’s tone or manners. With a focus on opening or closing communicative space, we might identify how civility can be used to shut down speech or create stopping points for communication. In essence, part of my point in this analysis has been to demonstrate that civility should largely follow from deliberative discourse—the two are valuable partners in constructing robust public engagement. To remain unendingly open to others in communicative acts presumes some degree of public rather than wholly private space, in which verbal or nonverbal gestures of reflection and respect are likely needed to create a shared space. At the same time, individuals should take seriously how such gestures could also become rhetorical weapons that forgo more broadly informed judgments. In either case, while upholding the best that standards of civil communication may offer, a deliberative criterion accounts for and addresses some of the rhetorical maneuvers enacted when civil appeals appear to be most limited.
CONCLUSION

Civility is a vital concept for public discourse. It is surely better that people on freeways, in supermarkets, or in public forums largely remain civil rather than uncivil. But I find that a "deliberative" approach can account for and address some of the limitations civility rhetoric currently faces, constructing a more robust civil discourse than might otherwise be afforded. Some may consider this project a recovery of some historical senses of civility, such as Aristotle's calls for civic friendship. I would not quibble with such assessments, but do find that civility rhetoric—as covered in scholarly debates and practiced in contemporary media messages—can sometimes obscure more than enlighten when it comes to stronger understandings of and practices for public communication, a problem that a deliberative orientation brings more sharply into focus.

In one sense, deliberative discourse highlights how concerns for the differences between education and propaganda may be more important considerations than civility alone. Alex Carey says propaganda is "communications where the form and content is selected with the single-minded purpose of bringing some target audience to adopt attitudes and beliefs chosen in advance by the sponsors of the communications," whereas education “encourage[s] critical enquiry . . . to open minds to arguments for and against any particular conclusion, rather than close them to the possibility of any conclusion but one.” The propaganda/education dichotomy may prove helpful for thinking about deliberative communication, but it is also a bit stark since this essay’s definition of “deliberative” finds room for single-minded purposes that can still remain open. Deliberative communication instead parallels more directly Wayne Booth’s statement: “Whatever imposes belief without personal engagement becomes inferior to whatever makes mutual exploration more likely. . . . The process of inquiry through discourse thus becomes more important than any possible conclusions, and whatever stultifies such fulfillment becomes demonstrably wrong.”

In this light, some typical ways of talking about politics may need revision. Once the election results were in, longtime political advisor Bob Shrum commented: “So what we are going to see tomorrow is more civility than you sometimes see after these elections” between the candidates. From a deliberative standpoint, such comments invite us to consider more than just the manner with which interlocutors engaged one another, instead
asking whether efforts at open, informed persuasion took place both before and after the election. Similarly, there is a popular tale often told about former Republican President Reagan and Democratic Speaker of the House Tip O'Neill grabbing beers and being civil toward one another after work, a model of political friendship that commentators like Tom Keene and Bob Woodward invoked in the media transcripts, and that this essay would generally support. My analysis suggests that if Reagan and O'Neill were only being civil to the exclusion of deliberation, however, such recollections might be viewed in a different light. While recognizing the term “deliberative” is not much used in current affairs, it can inform times and places when civility is being raised in a relatively unexamined fashion.

At the same time, we should not underestimate how engaging in deliberative discourse can also go awry. Cass Sunstein’s findings on the human tendency to engage in “enclave deliberation,” essentially becoming more extreme when having discussions in homogenous groups, present a clear challenge to such an ideal. Moreover, Stanley Deetz’s work on potential deliberative illusions—whereby management can, for instance, have a meeting where everyone is allowed to have their voice heard but nothing ever really changes—presents an additional obstacle to enacting strong forms of public reasoning and reasonability.

Yet both examples further focus the need to make broadly informed judgments that remain continually open to others’ communication. Sunstein’s findings rest upon groups’ homogeneity, demonstrating how easily extremist problems can stem from antideliberative, “narrowly” informed, overly closed communicative spaces. In Deetz’s example, the fault lies less with deliberative discourse than the need to remain vigilant about the different ways that communication can become less than “open” and accountable. As Postman said: “The distinction between language that says ‘Believe this’ and language that says ‘Consider this’ is, in my opinion, certainly worth making, and especially because the variety of ways of saying ‘Believe this’ are so various and sophisticated.” In other words, a deliberative approach should still attend to the complex, manifest ways that stopping points can be created through rhetorical acts—whether civil, deliberative, or other terms are being engaged. As Asen underscores, even calls for “counterpublicity” should be assessed in terms of how varying advocates can “restrict or expand discursive space for others.”
In a *Wall Street Journal* article after the election titled “Persuasion as the Cure for Incivility,” University of Notre Dame President John Jenkins argued that better understandings of persuasion can sharpen civility’s contours. He stated that “we need to try harder to persuade one another—to try to get people to change their minds,” since “much of the election campaigning and much of the budget discussion wasn’t designed to change anyone’s mind, but instead to encourage people to believe more deeply what they already believed.” Even attempts to have people acknowledge an exception or that a policy may not be so horrendous would be useful. In his words, “if we earnestly try to persuade, civility takes care of itself.” This closely related argument follows a similar path to the one pursued in this essay, although I find the concept of “deliberative” communication more useful than “persuasion” in asking us to balance efforts at changing one another’s minds with a willingness to be changed. Ultimately, my hope has been to point in one direction that might bring more clarity to our understandings of this subject, while energizing and improving what is possible in public discourse.

NOTES


19. Using "civility" also highlighted all uses of "incivility," although there were actually few uses of the latter term across the transcripts. I chose not to use related terms such as "civil" or "uncivil" given the need for scope and because "civility" appeared to have a narrower focus. "Civil," for example, is involved in more separate constructions such as "civil service."


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27. Specifically, the author conducted a Lexis-Nexis search of major world publications, narrowed the search to newspapers, and looked only at U.S.-based papers between July 1 and December 31, 2012. The term "civility" was used 379 times across 285 separate documents (some 725 pages). While Fox News used the term the most in the broadcast transcripts, the New York Times had the highest
number of documents with the word in the newspaper data (74 documents), whereas the Washington Post had 78, the Los Angeles Times 31, the Tampa Bay Times 20, and so forth. Using the software program Concordance, quantitative lists were created for each of the four words both before and after the term "civility" across all of the newspaper sources. Of terms with more than two references, words like "community" (12 counts in the 1 left category), "fairness" (5 counts in the 2 left category), "compassion" (14 counts in the 2 right category), "compromise" and "decent" (3 counts each in the 2 right category) appeared. In many cases, these high word counts were simply repetitious terms covering the same event across multiple sources, such as the word "community," which was brought up numerous times in the newspapers to refer to the same "seminar exploring community." Thus, there were very few word clusterings across the transcripts, showing that—in addition to the broadcast transcripts—much conceptual diversity around "civility" appeared across the newspapers.


34. "For October 13," par. 81.


53. A major study of blogs, talk radio, and cable news found that direct confrontation between people of differing viewpoints is absent in most of these types of media programs, which does not serve civility well either. As the authors underscored: “This relative lack of jousting is explained by the noteworthy absence of opposing voices within individual programs. Hosts share airtime with ideologically compatible voices, and periodically with moderate or ‘neutral’ visitors, but very rarely with true believers from the other side.” Sobieraj and Berry, “From Incivility,” 30.

54. Carter, Civility, 89.


58. “What are,” pars. 5-6.


70. To use an interpersonal example, this analysis is not suggesting that those in long-term, committed relationships should be "open" to leaving their partner.


73. See Waisanen, "Hermeneutic." This is not a call to embrace postmodern modes of interpretation. Religion writer Brian McLaren argues, for example, that attention to human interpretation is an ethical matter; in his Christian tradition, even Jesus and Paul took *selections* out of the Old Testament in support of their arguments to the *exclusion* of many other words and passages that might have been chosen. Brian D. McLaren, *Why Did Jesus, Moses, the Buddha and Mohammed Cross the Road? Christian Identity in a Multi-Faith World* (New York: Jericho Books, 2012).


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87. Some debate in the deliberative democracy literature has covered the extent to which communication norms might be considered universal or particular to contexts; see for example: Seyla Benhabib, "The Democratic Moment and the Problem of Difference," in *Democracy and Difference: Contesting the Boundaries of the Political*, ed. Seyla Benhabib (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), 3–18. My general definition and some of the specific planks for "deliberative" are positioned as conventions reflexively concerned for both unities and differences. The general definition of deliberative is intended to be a relatively applicable and productive orientation in public policy contexts (addressing calls for common norms and intersubjective values), but—in the spirit of the very definition itself—leaves open space for other emerging orientations, forms of appeal, styles, and the like to suitably address the demands of political situations by respecting concerns for difference and diversities.

88. Lozano-Reich and Cloud, "The Uncivil Tongue."


