

What's the Big Deal about Democracy

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Conference paper abstracts:

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Rights, democracy, madness and evil

In the contemporary world, there is increasing evidence that several liberal democracies, each of which upholds some version of the International Convention on Human Rights, may be implicitly questioning its universal applicability. In the UK, for example, legislation has recently been passed allowing the indefinite detention without trial of non-national suspected 'terrorists'. (see Anti Terrorism Crime and Security Act, 2001). The 'Terrorism Act' of 2006 categorises new offences such as 'glorifying the commission' or 'preparation of acts of terrorism'. I do not wish to downplay the effects of the carnage of, for example 7,7,2005 in London. Indeed, one might describe the acts of the perpetrators of these crimes as, in some sense, 'evil', if indeed anything is evil. (See Cole, 2006, for a questing of the view that there is any such thing.) However, the response to recent events of this kind has been not only to punish the perpetrators of the crime but also to label others as potential terrorists.

In this paper, I will argue (a) that there is a parallel between the exclusion of the 'mad' in Descartes' time from the concept of the rational being and the contemporary exclusion of the 'terror'suspect from the domain of liberal subject of rights. I will then go on to argue that this suggests a limitation of the concept that underlies most liberal conceptions of democracy: the notion of a right.

Pelin Ayan

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The effects of intra-party democracy revisited – the case of Turkey

Whether intra-party democracy has a consolidating or a deterrent effect on the operationalization of external democracy remains to be a disputable issue among scholars. On the one hand, the advocates of highly disciplined and centralized party structures emphasize that the existence of a strong top-level authority dominating local party organizations sets up a well-armed struggle in external politics by presenting a united front against the opposing parties. On the other hand, the advocates of less centralized and less disciplined

party structures underline the virtues of deliberation between local and central party organizations and argue that intra-party democracy provides public accountability.

In this paper, I discuss these two contradictory views on the basis of the distinction between Schedler's negative and positive conceptions of consolidation of democracy and present Turkey as a case study. The political culture and the institutions in Turkey have paved the way for the development of overly centralized structures within party organizations in which leadership hegemony is the main attribute. While Turkey is a case of consolidation of democracy based on its negative conception, that is, an electoral democracy where the possibility of a democratic breakdown is not possible, the political system is far behind developing into a completing democracy, a positive conception of the consolidation of democracy. I argue that it is the lack of intra-party democracy that contributes to the endurance of the electoral democracy and poses a barrier against the future development of a liberal democracy.

The argument relies primarily on a research of 90 in-depth interviews with activists from sixteen local party organizations, representing four ideologically distant political parties in four politically and geographically distinct sub-provinces of Turkey, conducted right after the national election on July 22, 2007. The secondary data covers the party statutes, programs, local party news and the media coverage of candidate selection behaviours of parties during the election process.

Hannon Birken-Bertsch

Independent scholar

The intangibility of democracy

The big *deal* about democracy is that everybody (domestic adults, that is) in a given country is called to cast her vote, without having to do, to give or to pay anything beyond what is involved the act of voting. The big *problem* of democracy is this ensuing lack of responsibility. One cannot, obviously in case of secret ballot, be held responsible for voting in this or that way.

Democracy is therefore intangible – untouchable – in two ways: (I.) There is, at least since world war II, no legitimate form of government other than democracy. Clearly “democracy” means here barely more than the limitation of the terms for holding office in the already existing institutions plus universal secret suffrage. But in many European countries these administrative institutions had other important qualities (e.g. strict official channels) helping to bring about a huge modernization very much attributed to democratization. This overestimation of democracy's effects leads to frustration in all those cases in which democracy is introduced with high expectations in countries with weaker institutions.

(II.) It is universal secret suffrage that causes problems in the old democracies. The intangibility of the voters – their historically important protection – gives them powers in regard to questions with ramifications way

beyond term time: national debt, pensions in times of demographic change, environmental and climate problems etc. In all these cases, voters can get away with not having to bear the consequences of their vote or to accept liabilities for it.

Part I. will be a brief historical overview based on existing scholarship (e.g. by Sternberger), Part II. a more of a philosophical argumentation.

Harald Borgebund
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Liberalism and the value of democracy: intrinsic or instrumental?

Why is democracy desirable? Is it because it realizes an ideal of political equality, or because it provides the preferred framework for public decision-making? Some deliberative democrats argue democracy is good in itself because it realizes an ideal of political equality. In contrast, procedural democrats claim democracy is valuable because it is a successful procedure for public decision-making. Both these dominating justifications of democracy acknowledge political equality, and see democracy as the most desirable framework for public decision-making. A main difference is the weight attached to these two reasons: deliberative democrats emphasize the intrinsic value of democracy, while proceduralists emphasize the instrumental value of democracy. Instead of merely emphasizing one of these two reasons; it is necessary to unite them. Liberal democracy achieves this, because it combines a strong notion of political equality with fair procedures. Following this, I argue democracy is principally justified because it provides a framework of fair procedures for public decision-making. Political equality is important to ensure the fairness of these procedures. Thus combined, democracy has mainly instrumental value, and only intrinsic value in a weak sense. This liberal justification provides the preferred justification for a democratic society, because it gives proper weight to both the intrinsic and instrumental justifications of democracy.

Christos Boukalas
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Government By Experts: Counterterrorism Intelligence and the Cancellation of Democracy

This presentation inscribes intelligence-based policy making in a framework marked by the antithetical relation between democracy and government by experts. It therefore discusses certain aspects of counterterrorism policy as indicative of a tendency transforming the US polity. The paper is pivoted on the focal point of the decision to raise the alert level of the Homeland Security Advisory System (HSAS). It investigates the process leading to the decision (the modalities of intelligence collection and analysis), and the social impact of its implementation.

The findings are inscribed to a discussion of the overall US polity through the core issue of democracy vs. 'government by experts'. The paper traces the question to its first formulation by Plato and Aristotle and, revisiting contemporary political philosophers like Castoriadis who placed central importance to this question, argues that both these antithetical tendencies are incorporated in the modern state –and so is the tension between them. The paper concludes that the political modalities showcased in the HSAS examination resolve this tension in favour of 'government by experts' and constitute its assertion with force unprecedented in modern (peacetime) history, while they exclude the population from any possibility of political control, cancelling thus the most basic postulates of democracy.

Emilia Brodencova

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Democracy terrorized or unmasked? On terror and blues, hangovers and headaches of democracy

Robert Pape in his *Dying to Win*, a book innovative for its claim that martyrdom operations/acts of terror, which are more conventionally but erroneously known as suicide terrorism, are not primarily religious, nor particularly Islamic, but nationalistic, identifies three root causes of these: First, they are a response to foreign occupation. Second, their strategic objective is to compel modern democracies to withdraw from the territories they claim and which the 'terrorists' consider to be their homeland. Third, they are most likely to occur when the occupier and the occupied are of different religion. While the implicit assumption of this argumentation, that modern democracies are the occupying powers, is often tacitly omitted in any 'terrorism' discourse, it is often claimed, and R. Pape does so as well, that democracies are "uniquely" vulnerable to acts of terror. Reasons given vary but the bottom line is that what modern democracies represent, as value-ideological systems, is diametrically opposed in a superior, but apparently fragile, way to terror and any political structures associated with terror. The argument follows a generally accepted conviction that democracy has become the ultimate incarnation of the peak of humanity (and civilization) itself while terror is seen to represent the archaic, primordial and pathological. It is disregarded here that humanity has been intertwined with terror and that terror has been present at the foundation, and in the modus operandi, of many democracies. The aim of my paper is to question this argumentation and consider to what extent terror is the radical enemy, the radical other, of democracy and to what extent it is its inseparable companion, its hidden double. I intend to situate my inquiry within the broader context of the critical assessment of what has become in recent decades almost a scholarly and public dogma, namely that democracy, seen as the incarnation of humanity at its best, is the ideal political system and that exporting democracy will bring an everlasting peace and well-being to the world stage. Yet democracy thus presented is highly idealized, simplified and commoditized, and it is my intention to elucidate how precisely terror can unmask democracy and reveal its blues, hangovers and headaches.

Gideon Calder

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Voices and decisions in the deliberative process

For Seyla Benhabib, the strength of deliberative democracy lies in its 'dual track' approach to politics. Such an approach combines a focus on the institutions of liberal-democratic societies, with on the other hand, the struggles and perspectives of groups and movements within civil society. This duality, and the contrast of the deliberative approach to a more strategic, instrumental calibration of losses and gains characteristic of alternative forms of decision-making, are sources of strong appeal. The deliberative model seems, precisely, better suited than utilitarian alternatives to accommodate both the struggles of social movements and conflicts between different values which punctuate the public sphere. And in Benhabib's account at least, it also seems more sociologically astute. Yet its proceduralism, this paper will suggest, gives a distorted picture both of decisions themselves, and their making. Two different kinds of flaw, in particular, make the model both idealised, and also inaccurate as a picture of how decision-making happens, particularly in a contemporary capitalist society. One flaw concerns the picture of decisions themselves, on which a deliberative account seems to depend. Another concerns the place of decision-makers vis-a-vis the matter for decision. Drawing on recent work by John O'Neill in the environmental context, and using also the example of disability politics, I will argue that democracy, whatever else it is, involves more than the exchange of arguments, and that the picture of argumentation we find in deliberative accounts is inadequate to achieve the kind of inclusivity which is the source of much of their initial attractiveness.

Isabell David

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Rethinking liberal democracy. The decline of politics and its consequences

In the long course of human evolution and political experimentation, democracy, especially after the events of 1989, has come to be seen as the best political system, or, at least, as Winston Churchill put it, "the worst form of government, except for all those other forms that have been tried from time to time" (From a House of Commons speech on November 11, 1947) - a vision which is clearly opposed to that of the Classics, who, curiously, always looked upon democracies with severe contempt. In fact, we seemed to have reached the only system compatible with liberty, after the dreadful experiences of Communist and Nazi totalitarianism, and its twin in the economic realm - capitalism.

However, by portraying itself as the only valid way of thinking, what this language - the end of history - entails in fact is the obliteration of alternative modes of thinking, but which is nothing more than the effective dominance of this particular ideology. The effect of this peculiar mechanics is self-evident: the persistence of one particular form of thinking self-multiplies and, through repetition, generates its own legitimacy. And it is here that lies precisely the gist of my paper. The obliteration of ideology has created a system which has

replaced the government of men with a government of things. In the process, isn't it possible that this politically correct mode of eliminating conflict, is, in truth, more liable to create a paralyzing uniformity rather than an undetermined infinity of forms of human living-together that reflect men's inventiveness?

Wim de Jong

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Democratizing democracy (1966 –1983)

I would like to present a paper on the discourse on democracy in the sixties and seventies, and its impact on political culture. The existing parliamentary democratic system was scrutinized for its democratic deficits, and an attempt was made to democratize democracy. Due to the inherently contested nature of democracy, we cannot a priori say that these participatory, sometimes communal or anarchic visions were alternatives to democracy, but of democracy. An idea of radical democracy was put forward, which engendered a contentious repertoire which shaped the democratic discourse of the period, changing political culture in some ways but pointing to structural limits of democratic systems in modern mass societies too. A battle was waged over the definition and self-understanding of democracies. Liberal democracy acquired a sacrosanct status in this period, becoming a hegemonic ethical concept. Democracy being seen as ultimate moral goal, it no longer only meant a certain system of government but a certain type of society.

The call for democratization of democracy was ultimately a populist one, stressing the gap between politics and constituency. Although this idealistic vision of democracy ultimately could not be realized, it did shape the content of the debate on democratic politics and democratic norms until our day. The promise of radical democracy never completely withered away, and inspires political culture in the western world until the present, in the critique of the technocratic aspects of parliamentary democratic politics in postwar mass society, which are still in fundamental tension with visions of radical participatory democracy. The ultimate consensus which was reached on the moral rights of individuals within democracies, to the point that democracy became synonymous with these rights, diminished the call for democratization and left the political arena open to the assertive individual politician wanting to actually use the acquired moral right.

Jurgen De Wispalaere

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Rethinking democratic competence and political inclusion

Modern democratic mechanisms claim to be inclusive yet often end up excluding certain individuals/groups on the basis of their supposed lack of "democratic competence". This is evident, e.g., when society prevents children, psychiatric patients and people with intellectual disabilities to vote in elections - the pinnacle of political participation in liberal democracy. This paper examines the notion of democratic competence

underlying these exclusionary practices and finds it wanting on several grounds. Proposed criteria of competence are often implicit, biased and incoherently employed within democratic procedures. Moreover, most typical "competent" voters engage with politics in a manner that often defies any robust account of democratic competence, suggesting an argument for excluding people from voting on a massive scale. Two types of counter-arguments against mass exclusion are considered: a) the epistemic democracy literature suggests that large number participation remains our best option for ensuring epistemically sound political decisions; b) large-scale participation remains a necessary (if not a sufficient) condition to fulfil democracy's promise of protecting the individual from arbitrary elite power. If these arguments are sound, political competence becomes largely irrelevant in relation to participation in democratic elections (and perhaps beyond that). The final part of the paper then uses this conclusion to argue that the current exclusion of children and those suffering from various cognitive defects is arbitrary and cannot be justified on competence grounds. Instead I propose a) that a democratic society has the duty to remove all legal barriers to voting participation and allow all citizens to participate when they wish do to so, with no regard of their age, cognitive capacity and so on and b) that democracy has as a duty to offer substantial accommodation to those groups of individuals who might want to participate but are unable to under current circumstances. I end the paper by briefly outlining several reform options and discussing some objections.

Dr. Allen N. Fairfax

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Alinsky-style organizing as an alternative practice of democracy

Saul Alinsky began a form of community organizing in the late 1930s in Chicago that has continued to evolve over the decades. The number of Alinsky-style organizations in the United States has grown dramatically since the early 1980s and many are becoming a recognized institutional presence in their local/regional polities. They regularly engage hundreds of citizens in public actions around particular issues (that may have local, regional or national linkages). This paper presents a framework for understanding the organizational and cognitive aspects of the participatory democracy that is being constructed in this current version of Alinsky-style organizing. What kind of participatory rule patterns are emerging from the continuous work of these organizations? What kinds of challenges are met by the grassroots leadership as they seek to enact public issue spaces within and across their member groups and into the power structures of the local/regional polity? This study is a further development of my previous case study of the Merrimack Valley Project, an exemplary Alinsky-style organization located in an historic industrial region in Massachusetts.

Javier Franzé

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Democracy: fight for meaning or human rights as a universal truth? Strauss' controversy with Schmitt and Weber

Is democracy possible because the values that maintain it are indisputable truths or precisely because within it, all things are disputable? In short, does democracy signify the union of truth and politics or a radical division of the two? In order to answer these questions, it is worth referring back to Leo Strauss' critique of Carl Schmitt and Max Weber.

At the beginning of the 20th century, Weber and Schmitt radically separate politics and truth. On one hand, because they – against the Aristotelian tradition – affirm it is impossible to define neither objective values, nor inherent values of activities, beings or things. And, on the other hand, because they affirm the world is open to pluralism and therefore that which defines politics is not the ends it seeks (common good, according to Western tradition), but rather the means with which it operates (violence).

Towards the 1930's to the 1950's, in a context marked by the experience of totalitarianisms and the crisis of classical political philosophy due to the peak in positivist political science, Strauss proposes to restore the classical notion of politics, rooted in rejoining what Weber and Schmitt had separated, truth and politics.

The relation between politics and meaning lies at the base of an interesting controversy on democracy. For Strauss, if politics is not considered subordinate to a previous truth, it is prologue to totalitarianism, because 'if God is dead, all is permitted'. On the contrary, Schmitt and Weber's thinking, precisely their affirmations on the baseless character of values, appears as an antecedent to the most radical concepts of democracy, based on deliberation and the struggle for meaning. In short, what lies beneath the tension between these two concepts of politics is whether the world and man are realities with inherent moral meaning or if they are factual realities.

Dr. Ruma Guha

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The democratic deficit of liberal democratic states

Democracy, without doubt, is the best form of government. However, what is debatable is whether there existed or even exists in the present age a democratic state as implied in the meaning of the term. This paper attempts to show that neither in the Greek city states nor the liberal democratic states of today could be identified as a democracy. Controversies concerning the growing power of corporate capitalism and its unhealthy practice on the state in undermining the democratic structures should not be treated as a new phenomenon of the 21st century. Rather this could be defined as the culmination of a long drawn process

beginning from the dawn of political civilization. Athenian democracy was fraught with limitations which disqualify it from being termed as a democracy. By restricting citizenship only to the guardian class and thereby denuding the substantial slave population from enjoying the freedom of active participation in the affairs of the polis, the Greek city states set the trend of today's corporate organizations extending its influence over the affairs of the state. In the modern age representative democracy also suffers from the same limitations as witnessed in the Athenian era. Liberal democracy's belief in political equality for all adult individuals ensured a socio-economic system in which people would be free to pursue their private interests and activities. Thus the state ensured freedom of two types that of electing the representatives as well as the freedom to earn profit: the former providing equality to all while the latter restricting the equality to a selected few. Consequently corporate organizations today enjoy a disproportionate structural influence over the state and its policy decisions. Hence democratic deficit has been a constant feature from the classical antiquity of direct democracy to the modern age of liberal democracy.

Ayelet Harel-Shalev

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“Performing” democracy in deeply divided societies – India and Israel as case studies

Many researchers doubt the suitability of liberal democracy to deeply divided societies in general and to post-colonial societies in particular. One of the reasons for this uncertainty is that deeply divided societies, which comprise several indigenous communities, are often 'dragged' into inevitable conflicts which raise the question: Which ethno-national community has the superiority or the hegemony over the homeland? Furthermore, many deeply divided states offer different group rights and create a "differentiated citizenship," rather than a universalistic one.

Several deeply divided societies chose to base their governance system on 'power sharing', and therefore they have reduced, for some extent, the intensity of these questions. Among the five states which have plural social composition and practice a democratic procedure for 60 years – Belgium, Canada, Switzerland, India and Israel – the first three have been assessed as close to the ideal-type of "consociational democracies". Indeed, Canada, Belgium, and Switzerland are defined as bi-national or multi-national states, each of which has established a government wherein the leaders of the significant ethno-national parts of society share power.

India and Israel are the only two of the five countries whose leaders chose not to establish a democratic regime based on power-sharing. In the case of India, the dominant Hindu leaders of colonial India rejected the demand of Muslim leaders to establish a power-sharing Hindu-Muslim government; thus they actually pushed the Muslims to aspire to establish a separate state of their own: Pakistan. Two independent states were eventually founded: India proclaimed itself religiously neutral whereas Pakistan declared itself a Muslim state.

In the case of Israel, the dominant Jewish Zionist leadership did not give serious consideration to the possibility of a joint Jewish–Arab Palestinian regime after 1940. The aspiration for Jewish sovereignty—the dream of founding a Jewish state in the land of Israel/Palestine—especially after the Holocaust and the eventual founding of this state by means of an all-out war, prevented this option from being deliberated in earnest. In addition, the Palestinians refused to accept the UN proposal of dividing the land between the two nations and thus prevented what could be called "the Pakistani option". In its declaration of independence, the state of Israel was informally defined as "a Jewish state" that protects the rights of all its citizens. The dilemma of regime's survivability without substantial power-sharing is further intriguing once we deal with democracies, where the level of state's control and repression is relatively limited and accountable than in any other type of political regime. In this context, this paper calls attention to an empirical and theoretical innovation in the research of the nature of democracy in deeply divided societies, in non-western countries. This article is meant to shed light upon the status of 'homeland' (indigenous) minority communities in deeply divided societies by comparing the state attitude toward two homeland minorities in countries which practice procedural democracy: the Arab-Palestinian minority in Israel and the Muslim minority in India. A main purpose of the comparison is the theoretical discussion about the status of homeland minorities in democracies that choose to base their governance system on a majority-rule governance system rather than on Power Sharing.

A preliminary examination of the main features of India and Israel does not encourage comparative study. Further inquiry, however, reveals many common features. India and Israel face similar problems, from schisms on religious, linguistic, and national grounds through social classification, economic crisis, and wars, to religious extremism. In spite of all the challenges; the democratic ethos in India and Israel has remained a major—one could say indivisible—part of their political systems and self-identities throughout the course of nation building.

The research includes a comprehensive yet focused comparison between India, a secular democracy, and Israel, an ethnic democracy. Analogous conflicts—the ethno-religious conflict between Hindus and Muslims in India and the national conflict in between Jews and Arab-Palestinians in Israel—are analyzed in depth. The analysis is based on a comparison of public, judicial and political policies toward minorities in several policy domains following fieldwork conducted in India and in Israel.

I am explicating how language of legal rights and its actualization, may offer minorities some empowerment, and enable the state to better govern without major concessions over power. While conventional wisdom looks into legal rights to minorities as a source of power I argue that the language of rights may deprive minorities of the ability to significantly challenge the state. Yet, the phenomenon of rights discourse is compound and may incite sociopolitical results as group rights and more significant power resources for non-ruling minorities.

Daniel Hausknost
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Liberal democracy and the limits to change: legitimacy, opacity and neutrality

The prevalent discourses of climate change, 'peak oil' and rampant global ecological decay suggest that radical change of some sort is inevitable - either as a result of wilful political agency or of social and economic crisis, or both. This evokes serious questions about the capabilities of modern democracies to bring about and cope with radical changes in the trajectory of capitalist development. Are the liberal state and its democratic structures ready for such deep transformations?

In this paper I want to investigate where the modern liberal state's intrinsic structural limits to change lie and what constitutes them. If the legitimacy of the liberal state depends on its 'neutrality' vis-à-vis competing conceptions of the good, how can politically decided social transformation happen without undermining this legitimacy? In re-interpreting some of the core tenets of F.A. Hayek's work, I will establish a structural view on neutrality, understood as the political construction of 'opacity' at the material core of liberal societies. According to this view, the liberal state's main strength lies in warranting a common perspective of all citizens on a reality that appears as given (and thus opaque) and not as designed (and thus transparent). Opacity functions as an 'epistemic bond' that unites all parts of society. The state's convenient role is thus to react to a reality it has not created. I will argue that this 'epistemological' notion of legitimacy has to be discerned from – and takes explanatory precedence over – the traditional 'ontological' concept of legitimacy. The epistemological properties of the system are thus more important for its stability than its ethical contents. But if liberal democracy is first of all a complex perceptual mechanism, what does that mean for its ability to facilitate societal change? I will show that liberal democracy's predicament is first of all one of agency.

Tim Houwen
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Populist democracy

Democracy and populism both take reference to 'the people'. This shared reference suggests the two are closely connected. Democracy is a disputed and disputable concept. In different societies a transformation has to take place from the popular will to government. The transformation or political representation requires legitimation itself and is, consequently, subject to discussion and contestation.

Any democratic polity is faced with several social problems and a even larger amount of solutions. Populists suggest to have the solution for these problems by presenting the people as a unity (Canovan, 1999: p. 5). Although populism points to a crisis of democracy, this doesn't necessarily have to be dangerous for a democracy. The crisis can be creative: the crisis has the potential of a (positive democratic) change. I will argue that populism cannot be circumscribed as anti-democratic, because it is part of the democratic framework.

Chiefly, populism is an effect or a mode of expression of the intrinsic dilemma's of representative democracy. Popular sovereignty has always to be mediated by representatives, but who represents the people? Because the projection of a gap between *dèmos en kratein* always can appear, populists can claim to be the true spokesman of the popular will. My hypothesis is that populists oppose to *la volonté de tous* which results in endless compromise and debate and pretend to be the personification of *la volonté générale*. However, by staying within the democratic framework populists represent the very plurality of 'the people' they deny. Therefore, populism points to the paradox of democratic unity, namely the actual plurality of 'the people' and the necessary unity of the polity.

Ismail Ibrahim and Aruna Bhagwan

Leicester Northwest Community Forum, UK

Public goods, local leadership and community well-being: The case of Leicester North-West Community Forum

This paper seeks to examine the impact of community-led initiatives in the regeneration of one of the areas considered as super lower output due to the interfacing of factors such as poverty, quality of life, crime and the overall well-being of the people living in the areas.

This paper will be using the public choice political framework to navigate how a complex nexus of public national, regional and local interventions merged with community-led initiatives to transform the lives of people living in Leicester Northwest.

The Northwest Forum, a local initiative that sought to improve the well-being of people in Leicester Northwest, addressed issues such as social deprivations and poverty through actively engaging the local residents of an area, that could arguably be described as a sore point in the early part of the 21st century - where images of poverty, unemployment, youth offending feed into a known narrative of exclusion and social deprivation. Due to its creative interventions in this deprived area, the Leicester North West Community Forum was selected as one of the few guide neighbourhoods in England whose best practice is being used as a model for actively engaging the citizens in local governance and for combating social exclusion and poverty in England.

This paper argues that the success of initiatives such as this and others across England calls for a re-examination of the meaning of representative democratic governance. It argues that the current orthodoxy of representative governance work to disempower the people and communities and by and large contribute to the disengagement of many people in politics. Building on the model of civil renewal developed by Atkinson, it argues that it is perhaps time we reformed representative democracy as practiced now to accommodate neighbourhood focussed community engaging participatory or associative democracy.

This paper speaks to researchers and people working in the areas of, democracy/ governance theory, politics, social housing and government interventions to address social exclusion, researchers and professionals working in the area of community development and social regeneration as well as to researchers and policy analysts who are interested in socially embedded application of public choice theory to local governance.

Bernard Jackson

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Democracy and its discontents

Recent work in African American philosophy has rekindled interest in issues concerning black identity. Cornell West explores these issues in an important, early work entitled *Prophecy Deliverance: an Afro-American Revolutionary Christianity*. In it, he undertakes an examination of four responses to “the modern justifications of the idea of white supremacy initiated in enlightened Europe and inseminated in the slavery-ridden United States.” (69) These responses, employed as theoretical constructs in his analysis, are the exceptionalist, assimilationist, marginalist, and humanist traditions in African-American history. After describing, analyzing and critiquing the first three traditions, West explains why he endorses the humanist tradition.

The humanist response to the challenges of self-image and self-determination is this: a promotion of an individuality strengthened by an honest encounter with the Afro-American past and the expansion of democratic control over the major institutions that regulate lives in America and abroad. (90)

These norms of individuality and democratic control of the political and productive processes are acceptable because they promote personal development, cultural growth, and human freedom. That is, these norms promote the constructive affirmation of self-respect. However, no matter how desirable the norms of the humanist tradition, they cannot be employed by those whose access to the mechanisms for this constructive affirmation is limited, to those who are victims of structural oppression.

Is democracy a necessary and sufficient for good government? I argue that it is not. Although democracy is necessary for good government, it is not sufficient. A good government is one that ensures the most extensive access to those societal mechanisms that promote personal development, cultural growth, and human freedom. This extensive access is oftentimes limited by the will of democratic majorities. Thus, a good government must ensure that the claims and liberties of groups within society limit this will.

Christopher Jay

UCL, UK

Making truth safe from democracy

As David Estlund has pointed out, under the assumption that there is political expertise it is not at all likely that the actual experts will gain the consent to govern of all those who will be governed or subject to their decisions. Under the weight of a Rawlsian principle to the effect that some form of consent to be governed thus (on the part of those who are to be governed thus) is a precondition for any form of government (including rule by the experts), Estlund employs this observation in an argument for more democratic political arrangements. But I argue that the Rawlsian assumption is under-motivated – Estlund’s motivation is circular – and that therefore the proper lesson of Estlund’s observation is anti-democratic since, in the absence of a well-motivated Rawlsian consent principle, the grim prospects for experts being recognised as experts tell most sceptically against notions of democracy which rest upon the assumption that voters are reliable at electing competent representatives or public servants, and that even democratic theories which rest upon weaker assumptions – e.g. that voters are competent at electing representatives who will accurately represent their subjective views – face similar difficulties. So under the assumption that there is political expertise (which I briefly defend), we have good theoretical reason to prefer less democratic arrangements for deciding who will make the political decisions. I finish by arguing that this anti-democratic conclusion cannot be reasonably blocked by appealing to a procedural (or virtue based) theory of democracy, and by pointing out that many of the virtues of ideal democracies (mainly freedoms and rights) have nothing to fear from my arguments since it is concern for just those sorts of virtues which (at least partly) determines the content of political expertise.

Tarik Kochi

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Democracy, violence and the international order

In recent times (Afghanistan 2001, Iraq 2003) a number of attempts have been made by Western states to ‘export’ democracy to so-called ‘rogue’ or ‘failed’ states through the use of force – namely via invasion and occupation. Further, in 2006 the Islamicist political party Hamas was elected to form the government of the Palestinian Authority. Subsequently, the democratic legitimacy of Hamas was not recognised by many Western states who continue to denounce Hamas as a ‘terrorist’ organisation. Between exportation and denunciation many things merge.

Historically ‘democratic’ polities have been founded upon moments of revolutionary violence, have been defended through the state’s use of war and have been suppressed or destroyed by the often violent intervention of foreign powers. This paper examines the role and status violence – as both revolutionary violence and inter-state war – in the foundation, defence and destruction of democratic polities. Looking at

and through ideas of 'constituent power' and 'cosmopolitanism' this paper asks a number of questions: Do we underestimate the role of violence when thinking about the conceptual meaning and practical operation of 'democracy?' Might a focus on violence help us to think about the meaning, potentiality and limits of 'democracy?'

Maria Kyriakidou

American College of Thessaloniki, Greece

Lessons from an unsuccessful alternative democratic experiment: the study of an idiosyncratic Greek eco-feminism

It is often argued that the renewal of democracy presupposes female emancipation and the essential participation of women in decision making centers. The demand for inclusive democracy is often associated with different ways of defining gender identities in contemporary social and political establishments. In this line, the research on the encounter between new social movements and state institutions is invaluable. In Greece from 1989 until 1993, a political party, the 'Ecologists-Alternatives' which was promoted as the coalition of ecologists and feminists, favoured by a short interval of a nearly proportional electoral system and boosted by its motto: 'New politics is a woman', won a parliamentary seat and was represented in the Greek parliament exclusively by women MPs.

The party endorsed alternative politics and corresponding social changes through its proclamations for direct democracy, many referenda and decision making based on broad consensus. Their delegates and representatives could be recalled for failing to carry out with the decisions made at the grassroots level and all officials with delegated powers were rotated frequently (every year) to avoid professionalisation of politics. 'Ecologists-Alternatives' and their parliamentary representatives supported the principles of direct, grassroots democracy but their political discourse and practices quite often exhibited theoretical breaches and ideological disparities. The failure of their enterprise to have a lasting effect on the contemporary Greek political system is worth studying since it sheds light on the weaknesses of the eco-feminist approach in general and the links between the development of social movements in Greece after the mid-1970s and the democratic processes.

The eco-feminist approach is one that associates women to nature as both been exploited by male domination. Emphasis is given on women's alleged 'natural' role as 'mothers' and on their supposedly 'natural' tendency towards peace and harmony. In the proposed paper I argue that this model of 'Mother-Nature' is comparable to gender dichotomies that patriarchy promotes and led to inadequate democracies in the past. It is furthermore suggested that whenever social movements which advocate direct democracy develop into established political parties and participate in electoral processes of the representative democracy they end up being absorbed by the state mechanism and they eventually lose their dynamic and their radical democratic worldview.

Ian Bryan and Peter Langford

University of Lancaster and Edge Hill University, UK

Representative democracy and immigration: The effect of the exclusion of non-nationals

Representative democracy establishes a form of democracy in which a separation is established between those who participate in elections and those who participate in concrete political decisions. This separation is held to be legitimate because those who participate in elections select those who will participate in concrete political decisions. This process of selection constitutes those who participate in concrete political decisions as the representatives of those who participate in elections. It is their status as representatives which enables a concrete political decision to be described as an expression of the electorate. This description is the assertion of the authority of these representatives both to introduce new legislation and to enforce existing legislation.

This separation established by representative democracy is accompanied by another separation which flows from the limitation of the authority of representative democracy to a specific territory. This confinement to a specific territory has the effect of imposing a limit upon those who can participate in representative democracy. This limit is expressed by the division of the population, within a specific territory, into nationals, who can participate, and non-nationals, who cannot participate. Non-nationals are, thereby, constituted as category of the population who cannot participate in a representative democracy, but remain subject to the concrete political decisions of a representative democracy.

This paper focuses upon this notion of a non-national in two stages. The first stage, interrogates the manner in which a representative democracy will exercise its authority in relation to non-nationals (deportation, detention centres and the combined delegation and reduction in levels of welfare provision) in order to maintain the division between nationals and non-nationals.

The second stage, then reflects upon this manner of treatment by raising the question of their justification. This, in turn, is seen to raise the question of the possibility of a critique of representative democracy itself.

Paul Lucardie

University of Groningen, The Netherlands

Democracy: an excellent idea? An exercise in political imagination

It is widely assumed that democracy is simply the best possible system of government, allowing for more equality and liberty than its alternatives. It is also assumed that most countries in Europe and North America can be regarded as 'democracies' – and more specifically: representative democracies. A third popular

assumption seems to be that alternatives to representative democracy are impossible, unstable or undesirable.

In the paper I would like to present at the conference in Brighton I will question all three assumptions. In the first place, I will argue – with some of the ancient Greeks – that a mixed system that combines democratic and aristocratic elements may be superior to a purely democratic regime. In the second place, I suggest that all so-called representative democracies are in fact mixed systems. Yet they are not necessarily the best possible polities: some alternative systems might provide an even better mix, from an egalitarian or libertarian viewpoint. Alternatives to be discussed are: municipalism, sortitionism and plebiscitarian democracy. Libertarian municipalists advocate a modern city-state governed directly by the people, through frequent popular assemblies. Sortitionists propose to select decision-makers (members of parliament) through a lottery. Plebiscitarians want to submit all important decisions directly to the people, in a plebiscite or referendum.

Dean Machin

A problem with justifying democracy on epistemic grounds

The epistemic democrat claims that democracy is the best means available to come to know what justice or the common good requires; this claim is an important plank of any case for democracy.

However, it is difficult to identify the conditions that uniquely make democracy epistemically valuable. Moreover, if the conditions that give democracy epistemic value are not unique to democracy, then any epistemic case for democracy may equally be an epistemic case for some non-democratic decision-making procedure. Let's call this conundrum the 'epistemic democrat's dilemma'.

Condorcet's Jury Theorem (CJT) illustrates the dilemma. CJT claims that where a choice is between two options and where each person is slightly better than random (50.1%, say) to get the right answer then where all citizens vote the outcome will almost infallibly identify the correct solution. But some voters are wiser than others so why not disenfranchise the less wise? Why not let the wiser citizens (the 'experts') decide? CJT, then, can justify both democracy and expert decision-making. Therefore, if one accepts a CJT-defence of democracy one cannot motivate a general objection to some non-democratic decision-making procedures.

I seek to solve the dilemma through locating democracy's epistemic value in the areas in which we believe experts' abilities are weak. These weaknesses are
that experts lack some relevant skills,
that experts suffer from worse reasoning defects than citizens, and,
that experts can be corrupt.

I offer a defence of democracy premised on the epistemic superiority of group diversity over individual expertise and on the grounds that democracy is the best way to utilize experts' expertise while avoiding problems 2-3. However, I show that even this account cannot solve the dilemma; I illustrate this with an example.

I conclude with some comments to suggest that the inability to solve the epistemic democrat's dilemma is not necessarily bad news.

Jay Mandle

Colgate University, USA

The electoral process as a public good

The presumed need to constrain popular rule is a continuing subject for theorists. The most prominent of the twentieth century advocates of limiting democracy was Joseph A. Schumpeter. This paper examines and casts doubt on Schumpeter's argument that elitist democracy is necessary because of voter irrationality and that the role of the public in a democracy should be confined to choosing among an elite group of politicians who compete in a market-like setting for votes. The paper proposes that instead the political process should be treated as a public good in which candidates for office receive financial support for their campaigns.

Mark McGovern

Edge Hill University

Peace, civilisation and good governance?¹ Democracy, terrorism and transitional justice in Afghanistan

In February this year the Foreign Secretary David Miliband delivered a keynote speech entitled 'The Democratic Imperative' in which he outlined the essence of his vision of a post-Blair foreign policy.² This was certainly no break with the military interventionist agenda that has framed the Labour Governments disastrous actions in Iraq and Afghanistan. Rather (Miliband argued) the 'mistakes' made in these wars that had raised 'doubts' and 'deep concerns' should not 'cloud the debate about promoting democracy around the world'.

¹ This phrase is taken from a speech delivered by Winston Churchill in July 1897 a few days before he embarked for the Afghan border to take part in the suppression of a tribal uprising: '[The British People must] carry out our mission of bearing peace, civilisation and good governance to the uttermost ends of the earth', (Winston S. Churchill, Speech to the Primrose League of Bath, July 1897, quoted in David B. Edwards (1996) *Heroes of the Age: Moral Fault Lines on the Afghan Frontier*, University of California Press, London, 175).

² David Miliband (2008) 'The Democratic Imperative', AungSan Suu Kyi Lecture, St Hughes College, Oxford, 12 February 2008, available at:

The aim of this paper is to critically assess the roots and nature of Labour's 'democracy promotion' and interventionist agenda by exploring the continuity such a vision represents not only with the policies of the last 10 years but in the context of the longer term history of British imperialism. The article will concentrate on the current war in Afghanistan and explore the construction of 'democracy' and 'terrorism', in the context of New Labour's rhetoric of 'progress' and 'modernisation', as variants of older imperial themes. It will also consider the implications of these constructions of 'democracy' and 'terrorism' for the incorporation of transitional justice, development and humanitarianism into a 'comprehensive approach' to waging the new empire wars.³

John McSweeney

Independent scholar

Giving politics an edge: Rancière and the anarchic principle of democracy

In *Hatred of Democracy*, Jacques Rancière counters contemporary concerns about the negative political and social impact of democratic forms of life, arguing that an 'an-archic' principle lies at the heart of democracy as a political form. Returning to Plato, he discovers a title to democratic authority, at once self-refuting and undermining of all other such titles, which nonetheless proves impossible to excise from democratic forms: that title characterised by the "absence of title"

The paper explores how, in Rancière's treatment, democracy thus cannot be identified with any institutional form. At a distance from Lefort's "empty space" of modern power and neo-Gramscian "radical democracy", it becomes rather a radical practice of those who constitute "the part without any part" within society. Such a democratic practice challenges those who would monopolise public life and its political forms, and seeks to protect the private from the encroachment of the political. These two impulses, it is argued, produce a complex political space in which the generation, against political appropriation, of new possibilities of experience becomes the condition of the invention of genuinely new political forms. As such, the paper proposes that Rancière's 'democracy' restores vitality to the notion of a democratic politics, giving to politics itself an 'edge' in the two-fold sense of creating new spaces at the limits of current political forms and defining political practice as the invention of such new (self-refuting) forms.

To foreground the 'liminal' quality of Rancière's proposal, the paper argues that it bears significant parallels with the ethics of the later Foucault, reformulating and extending the latter within a political register. In turn, Foucault's conception of disciplinary power facilitates the assessment, against criticisms by Žižek, of the effectiveness of Rancière's proposal before the thoroughgoing permeation, by economic relations, of the very space within which politics might be thought.

³ Joint Doctrine and Concepts Centre (2006) *Joint Discussion Note 4/05: The Comprehensive Approach*, JDCC/MOD: Swindon

Lilian Moncrieff
University of Glasgow, UK

Thank you for holding, your participation is very valuable to us

A great deal has been said about the growth of global corporate power and the extent to which it implies a democratic deficit. It is argued that the rootless, faceless collaboration of force that is the multi- or trans-national corporation bypasses basic principles of democratic accountability. It is not uncommon for the power and influence of corporations to rival that of States. Yet today, corporations still benefit significantly from the legal protection of corporate autonomy and a reverential status or power that comes with being in 'big business.'

Political consumerism has emerged in the deficit, a strategy founded to a significant extent on principles of democratic (or universal) participation in markets. In its traditional form, democratic participation has ensured that the citizen can always find him or herself in the mantra 'one person, one vote.' With an increasing naturalisation of market economy and the growing dominance of supply and demand as an organisational principle, however, political participation has been supplemented significantly by the notion 'one shopper, one purchase.' Recent developments such as CSR and Fair Trade demonstrate in the paper how the role of the consumer has become increasingly important in this respect.

It is then argued that democracy engenders certain forms of participation that not only parallel but fuse with the logic and goals of capitalist political economy. Where democracy beckons its citizens towards a project of 'self-realisation,' it creates a kind of social and economic space that allows markets to take over the task of responding to need and desire in its products. As such, the complicity that emerges between the mantras 'one person, one vote,' and 'one shopper, one purchase,' not only allows political economy to manage and dissipate political tension in markets but to find in it new productivities that further its cumulative goals.

Jide Ojo
Centre for Applied Philosophy and Strategic Thinking, Nigeria

Democratisation in africa: imperatives of cultural integration

Contradictions between the local cultural values and attitudes and the core principles and norms of western democracy pose real and potent threats to the democratization process in Africa. The paper will re-examine the nature of the threats and the challenges they raise, how some societies have approached them, and suggest how we could develop models that would be suitable for African experience.

This paper will re-examine the aspect of cultural elements in the development process of democratization in African new or emergent democracies.

We identify two sides to the democratization process. First, the structural environment (political structures and institutions, constitutional provisions and legal framework). Second, the mental environment or the subjective dimension (referring to the cultural values, politically significant belief systems, attitudes, perception of leadership – followership relations and traditional sources of legitimacy of the people). The real threats to the development of genuine democracy in Africa is not basically the absence of structures and coordinating institutions fashioned after the western models, but the contradictions and incongruities between the indigenous cultural values and attitudes on the one hand and the core values and norms of modern (western) democracy on the other.

Actual historical experience shows that the development of democratic institutions and processes depends on the effectiveness of the understanding of the dynamics of the cultural variables and conscientization of the people. It is through the appropriate political education process that the people will develop to appreciate and internalize these values hitherto perceived as foreign.

We shall attempt a clear and concise analysis of the phenomenon of socio-cultural challenges to the development of genuine democracy in Africa.

Our findings and recommendations will be of immense value to local democracy activists and national political education and orientation agencies in Africa.

Cezary Józef Olbromski

Marie Curie-Sklodowska University, Poland

Collective (post?) democracy: intentional legitimisation of the de-political power

The paper discusses some conceptual problem of legitimisation of the collective power in perspective of freedom as non-domination.

While our mental constructs and imagination are largely shaped by past-oriented narratives of grand cultural patterns, in the modern world we are close relatives of Heraclitus not Parmenides. As a matter of fact we must have strict and certain knowledge, but we can only have a secure one. The search for security is our response to diagnosed risk factors. Objectivity and intersubjectivity of knowledge is gained by conducting and futurological work, and not through in-depth in historical analyses. This paper intends to be an answer to these socio-economic processes of the modern world by a political scientist.

The proposed in the text view leads to unconditional intentions. In this postulated collective appointing representatives, entitlements of individuals become entitlements of citizens: entitlements of citizens are defined as entitlements of community, are defined as representatives' authority. The basis of the

legitimation of the reciprocal power is its pre-community ("by virtue of social design") of an appointing of the power: non-domination is the notion of (civil) freedom.

"Freedom as non-domination represents the freedom of the city, freedom as non-interference tends to represent the freedom of the health" writes Philippe Pettit (Pettit, *Republicanism: A Theory of Freedom and Government*: 67) One may ask, is an extreme situation (cf. Schmitt) the border situation of freedom as non-domination? The question is asked in a sense of every arbitrary decision of the government taken into the name of common interest (cf. Platonian scheme of power: One rules, one makes decision because he or she knows what is this common interest).

Cyril-Mary Pius Olatunji

University of Zululand, South Africa

Democracy in Africa and Africa in democracy: a critical notice

If we define democracy as "rule by the people", or more narrowly, as "control of government by the people" or even as "the government of the people by the people and for the people," democracy ought to naturally and automatically translate to social and economic development of every democratic nation. Unfortunately, most African countries have had democracy for some decades, while a few others have been on the process for so long. However, most of the nations are in both social and economic quandary in addition to ethnic, political and religious conflicts and violence. Many African scholars are beginning to recommend alternatives to democracy; seeing democracy as an ideological curse on the continent. This paper identifies the divergent opinion of scholars on the root cause of the African predicaments and then of the failures of democracy in Africa. It is therefore argued that the retardedness of African development, which translates to backwardness, poverty, conflicts and violence are consequences of the constant conflicts between key strands of modern democracy and the core cultural value of the African communitarian system. This paper consequently recommends an alternative approach to democracy more in keeping with African cultural values and conceptual scheme.

Anton Petrenko

Okanagan College, Canada

On moral foundations of democratic political organization

"In the second half of the twentieth century, the political transformations resulting from the decline of colonialism in Africa and South Asia have precipitated the emergence of states with a unique interpretation of democratic political organization – guided democracies. Recent years have seen similar adaptations of democratic theory under the guise of guided or sovereign democracy in Russia. The universalistic

pretensions of the western conception of democracy are questioned, and its organizational form is challenged as ineffective, inefficient, or subversive of traditional society. In this work I will argue that these and other criticisms misconstrue the true nature of democratic justification. Democratic political organization, unlike e.g. organization of business activity, is not organization of teleological activity subject to pragmatic considerations of contextual fitness, adequacy, effectiveness or efficiency – it is an organizational expression of a universalistic moral doctrine at the centre of which lies the concept of moral agency. I will argue that democratic political organization has a moral justification, and as such, its form is dictated by moral obligations and duties of respect for individual autonomy – it is the right form of government, quite irrespective of whether it is the best form of government ever devised.

Locating the justification of democratic political organization in moral theory does justice to our moral intuitions about universalistic legitimacy of democracy and the normative language in which discussions of its institutions is normally couched. It also explains the suspicion and skepticism felt towards the calls by the proponents of sovereign or guided democracy for the adaptation of democratic institutions to local contexts, values, or traditions. Nevertheless, the explicit recognition of the moral nature of democratic justification raises a legitimate question of how to reconcile the conflict between its principles and the traditional moral values it often seeks to supplant. This issue will also be addressed.”

Jasdev Rai

Sikh Human Rights Group, UK

Best of the worst? So who are the worsts?

Democracy is the form of human organisation of our times enshrined in western righteousness, the United Nations treaties and yardstick of civilised governance used to judge developing countries. It has reached the status of sacred religion. Disbelievers are treated as pariahs or political heathens who need to be converted. But who does democracy suit? An examination of the arrangements in British Parliament are revealing. Democracy is perhaps the most peaceful form of governance for adversarial and individualistic communities or people in which the individual has a considerable degree of political autonomy. However certain communities have evolved over centuries as co-dependent people, or dependent on a group of specialists making decisions and as in the pre colonial Indian civilisation, even as non political communities where rulers did not matter. For instance Confucius China, Islamic Pakistan, Vedic India and the Sikhs have different dynamics of traditional decision making. Their political systems have their own dynamics of accommodating dissent and expression. More than freedom of expression, basic necessities such as food and shelter are far more important to human beings. If alternative systems can provide these more effectively than democracy for those communities, then the obsession with converting the political heathen is as undesirable as imposing a religious dogma upon others. Two cases that can be looked at are India and China. Both countries abuse human rights in almost similar numbers. 70% of Indians live under the poverty line in democratic India whereas undemocratic China has succeeded in feeding and housing a far greater

number of its population. In conclusion, democracy best serves a certain form of society and is not a universal enlightenment.

Frank S. Ravitch

Michigan State University College of Law, USA

The hermeneutics of liberal democracies and natural rights discourse

Most western democracies are undergirded by a notion of natural rights; although there are a wide variety of ideas regarding what these rights are and how they are to be determined. This presentation will argue that there is a similarity between the natural rights underpinnings of most western democracies and faith, which was earlier used to undergird theocracies and in some cases monarchies. Historical situatedness and dasein (being in the world) cause citizens to imagine the potential of democracies from within limited horizons, and the concept of democracy itself may have a limiting horizon when countermajoritarian concerns become involved. The belief in the correctness of established democratic principles causes people to take the superiority of those principles on faith, which reifies an established democratic order and particular fundamental rights. Yet, these same beliefs may limit the potential of expanding democratic ideals beyond the democratic tenets that have become part of the faith and liturgy of western democracies. From a pragmatic perspective, democracy and representative democracy is a vast improvement over previously dominant alternatives, but faith in particular democratic systems and rights may limit the possibilities democracy could yet come to foster.

Paul Reynolds

Edge Hill University, UK

The vagaries of democracy: meritocracy, mediocracy or mass rule?

In this paper I want to explore the notion that democracy is inherently 'the worst system except for all the others' by focusing on the subject of democracy - the democratic citizen. Democratic theory has always been suspicious of mass rule as a condition of mass participation in politics and has instead preferred not to dwell on mass rule or the clear critical gaze that mass and mob politics fails to stand up to. Representative democracies mediate mass rule through political classes. Democracy is supported because of an inherent meritocracy that not only specifies that the elite political classes will have merit but that they will occupy political space - the media or education that encourages mass education and learning to be better democratic citizens. The fear is that this dilute meritocracy and supplants it with mediocracy. This paper will survey those positions, argue powerfully that we err towards the latter, and explore arguments that seek to reinstate the inherent value of democracy, focusing particularly on the idea of political literacy, by which we can measure the prospects and problems in democratic politics.

Makoto Suzuki

Res Nanzan University Institute for Social Ethics, Japan

Does democracy have a unique right to rule? – A critique of Thomas Christiano’s democratic conception of legitimate political authority

In ‘The Authority of Democracy’,⁴ Thomas Christiano proposes a new conception of legitimate political authority. He argues that because only democracy embodies the justice of public equality between people, democracy has the unique right to rule and everyone has the correlative obligation to obey its decrees in order to avoid treating others as inferiors. Christiano’s view is original and intuitive because, differing from its competitors, it gives authority to democracy alone. It is ambitious because it confers on democracy a right to rule that grounds every inhabitant’s preemptive – preclusive-of-other-considerations – obligation to obey its legislations regardless of their contents. Further, Christiano’s theory is systematic because it simultaneously explains the limit of authority with the same principle of justice: a polity loses the right to rule vis-à-vis everyone when and only when it ceases to embody public equality by disenfranchising some people or infringing their basic liberties. This paper examines whether these interesting conclusions are sustainable and whether public equality is the ground for democracy’s unique authority, by pursuing three issues. First, the paper examines whether people’s duty to obey is preemptive and content-independent. Does breaking a law, say, jaywalking a road, necessarily imply treating others as inferiors? And can’t other things than the government’s infringing its citizens’ democratic or liberty rights – say, its grave infringement of property rights or aggression into another country – ground civil disobedience? Second, the paper considers whether public equality is sufficient for democracy’s unique authority. Isn’t public equality embodied by democracy’s two competitors, anarchy and meritocracy? Third, the paper examines whether public equality is necessary for authority. Does disenfranchising some people necessarily deprive a polity of the right to rule other people or even the disenfranchised?

Sotiris Themistokelous

Birkbeck College, University of London, UK

Global governance and liberal democratic nation-states: From national to liberal identity construction

This paper will suggest that the contemporary nation-states that anticipate a privileged position in the capitalist world-system have transformed their domestic procedures of identity construction from nationalism to liberalism. Recently, the USA and the EU made clear that they would consider a liberal democratic government as a criterion for state recognition and its full participation in a world system of interstate relations. Even though classical liberalism includes human rights discourse it is more than obvious that this

⁴ *The Journal of Political Philosophy* 12(3), 2004, 266-290. Christiano reportedly details his theory in his forthcoming book from Oxford University Press.

rhetoric is nowadays at the service of capitalism. While in previous historical periods the protection of domestic capital and market demanded strict boundaries, now with the extensive cosmopolitanism of the capital, liberal states tend to promote new policies for capital expansion inwards and outwards. Immigration is a field that is directly linked to this service.

Thus, the paper will explore the role of international organizations (WTO, IMF, World Bank) in creating new liberal democratic elites dedicated to the "free market" in developing countries, replacing the authoritarian elites of colonialism and early post-colonialism. These novel "national" elites carry on the efforts for the social transformation based on the model of liberal democracy in the course of capitalist globalization. In addition to the means of identity construction it will also refer to the NGOs and their role in current democratic processes along with a seemingly a-political stance projected on them and will argue on the importance of developed capitalist states in directing and controlling these processes either unilaterally or multilaterally.

So, the state remains very important in contemporary political life because corporate power needs the states in order to construct a liberal identity. In this context, freedom becomes a rather restrained concept (e.g. the freedom to pursue our self-interest) within the dominant, hegemonic vision of political and economic elites that exploit democratic institutions and resources to their benefit. It is therefore apparent that the answer to the question whether global capitalism is a threat to democracy is affirmative because there are tensions between political democracy and class inequality. As states remain the main arena of political conflict, their institutions meddle with different aspects of production. In this course, through the monopoly of the legitimate use of force, repressive mechanisms limit the citizens' democratic rights. Even though policing rhetoric insists on accommodating everyone's rights ironically this is a legalistic and abstract notion of democracy that leads to the suppression of the democratic expression of conflicting views. Furthermore, media news fabrication and coverage quite often conform to the dominant, hegemonic ideology and interests associated with abundant funds inevitably leading to a democratic deficit. This investigation will be based on the Gramscian analytical framework, introducing the notions of hegemony and cultural dominance of the ruling classes in contemporary liberal democracies.

Catherine Lane West-Newman

University of Auckland, New Zealand

Democracy and emotions: uneasy connections?

Politics, democratic or otherwise, and emotions are not generally thought to have much to do with each other. Writers on social theory, cultural studies, and political and socio-legal theory who make this connection usually identify the damage that feelings, repressed or openly demonstrated, may enact in collective life of democratic societies. Certainly emotions, once admitted to public debate, are available for deployment in competing claims for recognition, often in situations where conflicting interests defy reconciliation. Particular

concern has focused on the ways in which competing interest claims in multicultural societies, framed around historical and present minority group trauma and suffering, distort relationships in contemporary public life. In such contexts, both minority claims and majority responses are said to lack authenticity and, in effect, pervert democracy.

The significance of the free and open exchange of ideas, defined as freedom of expression, is enshrined in the First Amendment to the United States Constitution and prominent in the rights frameworks of many nations. So how might the open expression and acknowledgment of feelings in the political processes of democratic societies ‘pervert’ democracy? And might it instead be argued that deliberative democracy – public debate toward consensus – would be enriched by open acknowledgement of the part emotions play in the lives of individuals and groups? I want to argue that there are reasons to suppose that emotions may have a positive role in participatory democracy.

The order of my discussion moves from writers such as Frank Furedi and Stepjan Mestrovic, who take a wide general perspective on societies and social practices to the focus on more specific rights issues in the work of Wendy Brown and Lauren Berlant, and finally to commentators who offer close readings of individual emotions manifest through particular texts produced through institutions of civil society. Through the latter, specifically in the work of Sara Ahmed and Elspeth Probyn, some ideas from cultural studies may be seen to offer a more optimistic conception of feelings which might, under certain circumstances, nourish participatory democracy through the healing of historical wounds. The discussion is illustrated with case study examples from Australia and New Zealand.

Steven Whitfield

Independent scholar

Voting away our power?

Democracy is understood to be a form of government in which the people have a say in the exercise of power. The form of democracy that has endured to be prevalent in modern times is representative democracy, which is generally thought to be the most practical method of democratic rule. Here the people exercise their right to have a say in the governing of the state by voting for a parliamentary representative. But is the act of voting for a preferred representative adequate to fulfil the requirements of a claim that a state is governed democratically?

In this paper, I argue that by exercising the right to vote, the individual is actually agreeing to give up the right to have an on-going say in the affairs of the state; and therefore representative democracy, in its current form, is not democracy at all.

To support my argument, I discuss points raised by Aristotle (that a person can only be considered a citizen if he engages in public debates at the Forum) and Rousseau (that representing the people deprives them of the liberty of governing themselves). I also point to present-day political apathy in the public as an indication that representative democracy is unsatisfactory; and from there I suggest ways in which the democratic system can be improved, by way of encouraging the public to take more part in the governing of the state, both locally and nationally, through use of modern communications technology. In turn, the government must be seen to be answerable to the public.

Aaron Winter

University of Abertay, Dundee, UK

Domestic protest and the representation of democracy in America

Since the events of 9/11, much like previous moments of hegemonic assertion and imperialist expansion (from the cold war to the war on terror), America, its government and the citizens that 'represent' the former and 'elect' the latter, have frequently and repeatedly extolled the virtues of democracy. Yet these are not the virtues of democracy in and of itself, but as an American virtue, one that requires defence and demands its exportation to and imposition on others peoples and nations who are either impoverished by their lack or are believed to threaten American democracy. The problem and poverty of this representation of democracy as American virtue and its democratizing mission, is not only its violence it justifies and utilizes, the un-democratic regimes it supports and depends on in other countries, or the economic agenda it hides and economic inequality it exploits abroad, but also the denial and displacement of democracy at home - from the denial of civil liberties and voting rights to the more general racism, political repression, religious fundamentalism, sectarianism and extremism within America. Perhaps one of the most highly regarded and frequently evoked characteristics of American democracy is that of protest and activism, of various political stripes, including: the American Revolution, the Civil Rights, anti-war, gun rights and anti-abortion movements (although the Ku Klux Klan and others are frequently left out of this history). Focusing on the post-civil rights era, I will look at how domestic protest movements (both pro- and anti-democratic, left and right), their causes and achievements are co-opted as essential to American democracy or rejected as threats to it through various discursive practices and popular representations, depending on their politics and particular context.

Evert van der Zweerde

Radboud University of Nijmegen, The Netherlands

Check the balance! Reflections on democracy as a paradoxical process

One of today's commonplaces is that democracy is "in crisis". The perceived gap between government and citizen, the emergence of populism, and the transformation of elections into media events seem to testify to this. One solution is to emphasize that democracy is always "yet to come", and that it is a form of "living dangerously": democracy is "democrisy" by definition. Although this idea does contain an important truth, it is too easy an answer to today's problems of legitimate democratic government.

The "crisis" arises from the concurrence of three problems. The first is an intrinsic problem of representative government: the necessary distance between those who represent and those who are represented. The second problem is also intrinsic: decisions that are reached through democratic procedures are not necessarily the best in terms of dealing with social problems. The third problem, partly coinciding with "globalization", is the decreasing grip that governments have on society.

To assess the "critical state" of democracy, three steps must be taken. The problems indicated above must be disentangled: they may reinforce each other, but they are not identical. Second: to distinguish between democracy as a type of polity, and democracy as a quality of political processes in general. This may reduce the focus on "the government" and "the people". Third: to elaborate a conception of democracy that sees it, primarily, as a matter of balances between unequal factors (the checks, e.g. law, are never absolute, therefore the balances are crucial).

The alleged crisis of democracy, occasioning the question if democracy is the best system of government, stems from a simultaneous occurrence of "imbalances". The nature of democracy implies that balances cannot "be restored" – they have to regain themselves in the process. After all, *bios politikos* is a *praxis* (Aristotle).