

Democracy Unbound: Introduction to Papers on Global Democracy

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There is no doubt whatsoever that the papers presented in this volume cover a very wide, even extensive range of topics. This is of course logical, given the multi-disciplinary nature of this scientific project. Nevertheless, it is a pleasure to present no less than eight papers devoted to new results and ideas in fields as diverse as psychology, philosophy, political science and law, dealing with matters such as electoral behavior, globalization, the concept of democracy, the role of experts or the relevance of thinkers such as Plato and Hobbes for the current discussion on the EU constitution.

In alphabetical order – since I sincerely fear that any other way to present the contributions may be unfair to some of the participants – Lars Bergström deals with the very notion or concept of democracy itself. Under the headline Degrees of democraticity, Bergström argues, first, for a separation between normative and definitional questions and, then, in favour of a material and not only formal definition of democracy – which however also means that not all factors that may make a society more democratic are not automatically positive; sometimes, as he puts it, Y should be preferred before X although X is more democratic. Democracy, thus, may encompass more than we normally believe, but is at the same time not the only societal value that should be taken into account.

Gilian Brock discusses the concepts of Global or Cosmopolitan Democracy and, more precisely, Global Governance, taking the ideas of David Held and Will Kymlicka as her point of departure. The objections raised in the international doctrine against the well-known model of Cosmopolitan Democracy associated with Held are seen as exaggerated, since a collective identity should not be seen as a pre-requisite for a functioning democracy, according to the author.

The psychologists Girts Dimdins, Henry Montgomery and Erik Norell have together written a study on voting behaviour, under the title Egalitarian vs. proportional voting in various contexts: An experimental study. The main result of the studies which they relate is that proportional voting, i.e. voting procedures where the number of votes per person are determined based on how much the outcome of the vote influences each voter, was valued more favorably when more information was available about the stakes of those involved in the voting process. Otherwise, voters seem to be equally satisfied with proportional and egalitarian voting procedures. It is, of course, a totally different question whether proportional voting schemes may ever realistically become a part of real-life democratic processes.

The Australian philosopher Robert E. Goodin focuses on the rather unusual question what it actually means that a law is democratically binding. He analyses this question from a distinct non-majoritarian perspective, rejecting traditional procedural definitions of democracy as inadequate. From that point of departure, it

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turns out that the issues involved are extremely complex, not least if the fate of future generations is also involved in the weighing of interests that the determination of a law's bindingness entails.

In a similar manner, to deviate slightly from the alphabetical order, Thomas Kaiserfeld analyses the legitimacy of experts within international bodies like WTO or the World Bank, who tend to be ever more powerful. This is another rarely discussed issue of great importance in the specific context of global democracy. The analysis undertaken here focuses on and takes its point of departure in general scientific theory and theory of knowledge, with an emphasis on psychology, but anyone who wishes to study this field closer may also draw practical conclusions from the line of reasoning presented here, once applied to a specific institutional context.

Carol C. Gould on her part chooses to focus on the role of cross-border communities and transnational associations, which according to her require new ways of thinking about the norms involved in democracy in a globalised world since they require a new framework within democratic theory. In particular, the concept of transnational representation within such entities merits attention. Also here, the relation between democracy in the sense of participation and the concept of the nation-state (and whether democracy may be exercised also at other, supranational levels) is particularly crucial.

May Thorseth instead focuses on the relation between modern pluralism, in the globalised world, and tendencies to religious or political fundamentalism, which is indeed one of the main problems in the modern world. The article starts by discussing the relevance of philosophers like Kant and Habermas in this context, but then goes on to discuss those issues in a totally different context, namely modern phenomena like online polling and blogs, that might, according to the author, prevent fundamentalist knowledge both online and "offline".

Finally, legal philosopher Ola Zetterquist discusses whether the EU of today, in its current constitutional form, should be seen as belonging to a "Hobbesian" or a republican tradition of democracy, tracing its roots to Roman law. The issue may be seen as highly theoretical, but turns out to have great practical relevance once it is revealed that though making decisions that affect the lives of its citizens, the EU must not be seen as a state. The EU, in other words, is a "constitutional enigma", where the call for a "politicizing" should not be confused with the call for a European state.

Taken together, these many interesting articles may hopefully and rightly be seen as important contributions to the current, ever-growing debate on global democracy. It has been a true pleasure to participate in this unique and innovative multi-disciplinary project.

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