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Democracy, Philosophy and Philosophers

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Abstract

In view of the rise of populist movements in recent decades, the question of democracy has once again become a pressing one. For most observers populism as it presents itself today means a right-wing authoritarian anti-liberal political orientation. Not everyone shares this view. For some, populism does not represent an ideology, or a substantive political position, for them it is a form of practice, a way of drawing boundaries. And, therefore, it can take on a left-wing or a right-wing form. According to these commentators, populism in both its left or right-wing version is held to be essential to, if not identical with, the notion of the political itself. So, those advocating a neutral, non-ideological, conception of populism argue, that if politics is a matter of contesting different interpretations of what constitutes the best life, it is coeval with democracy. By this, they do not mean that all regimes are democratic. They mean, rather, that whoever takes politics seriously must think of it as battleground where different conceptions of what it is to live well in a given community has to be fought over. In ancient Greece political philosophers had a different idea of what constituted politics. For them it was the search for the best form of communal living, putting emphasis on harmony and social cohesion. For this reason, the ancients were negatively disposed towards democracy to begin with. Remnants of hostility to democracy remain in the thought of those modern thinkers who identify democracy with the populism they reject. In this essay, I want to trace the history of attitudes toward democracy, through a selection of philosophers: Plato, Aristotle, Spinoza, Hegel, C. B. MacPherson, Carl Schmitt and Chantal Mouffe. I want to show that democracy, even in its modern meaning, is problematic and, for that reason, it receives different definitions and different ways of defending it.

Keywords

Populism, Democracy, Political Philosophy, Left-Wing Populism, Right-Wing Authoritarianism, The Political, Ancient Greek Philosophy, Modern Political Thinkers

1. Introduction

Traditionally, philosophers have not been great fans of democracy, and even those who gave it conditional support put limitations on its application. One problem modern commentators have to face up to is that over time the meaning of democracy has changed. Initially, in its Athenian context it simply meant "power of the people". More specifically, it meant "power of the poor". Since the poor were in the majority, it meant also "power of the many". In more recent times, democracy has come to mean "liberal democracy": a combination of the notion of equal right for all to political participation, and, at the same time, respecting the liberty of individuals within a system of laws.

It has been noted that liberalism was an achievement of the 18th century enlightenment which, at its beginning, was undemocratic. Democracy came to be allied with liberalism as a result of increasing demand for greater civic (popular) equality. In other words, demand for greater freedom for a greater number of people resulted in demand for greater popular access to political decision making. So, if by liberalism one means protecting individual liberties and following the rule of law, and by democracy one means people's power to express their choices through free and fair elections, liberal democracy can be seen as a form of government in which the greatest possible number of citizens can exercise their power under the law. There are two conceptions of democracy competing for attention today: procedural and substantial democracy. The first values in democratic elections the fact that it provides a method for expressing the wishes of the majority. The problem with it is that democracy understood that way may result in outcomes that would harm the interests of the majority. For that reason, the second emphasizes not the method but the result of elections. It is often thought that in order to achieve desirable results the number of voters participating in elections may have to be reduced. For example, by giving more votes to the well educated.[1]

My focus in this essay will be on the views of seven philosophers on democracy: two ancient philosophers, Plato and Aristotle (Aristotle, 2012); two modern philosophers, Spinoza and Hegel and three contemporary ones, C. B. MacPherson (MacPherson, 1964), Carl Schmitt and Chantale Mouffe.[2] The writings of these philosophers are, I think, a fair sample of the different political positions from which democracy can be examined. Discussing these views in their historical context is significant. For, as indicated in the previous paragraph, the definition of "democracy" has changed over time, and one may add that with these changes the attitude of philosophers to democratic politics has also changed. However, in my

[1]J. S. Mill was one of the first proponent of the universal franchise. Still, he qualified it with the method plural of voting, namely, giving more votes to those with higher education.

[2]Not everyone would have chosen McPherson, Schmitt and Mouffe as representatives of contemporary views on democracy. I chose them because I find their positions particularly influential, allowing me to introduce other contemporary figures as they relate to their views. For example, I give a brief account of Michael Sandel's contribution to Civic Republicanism without giving a more detailed account of his political philosophy. Also, I mention Fareed Zakaria and Victor Orban in connection with illiberal democracy.

view, the problem of democracy is closely connected to the problem of citizenship. In order to enable democratic regimes to function properly, citizens must first be provided with a sense of loyalty to their community. As many philosophers, especially those leaning toward a communitarian perspective, have suggested, civic virtue arises in a context of practicing self-government. And this cannot be imposed from above. It needs to emerge from participating in different types of community associations.

2. Plato and Aristotle

The ancients, Plato and Aristotle, had a negative view of full and direct participation by the masses, the *demos*, in political decision making. Judging by their major political writings, neither of them favored pure, unconstrained, direct democracy, but Plato was even more hostile to it than was Aristotle. His hostile criticisms in *Republic* (*R*) VIII stand out. Still, it is possible that Plato might have allowed for some democratic elements even in the best form of government, provided that all those participating in it respected the laws. Even in the *Republic* which contains his harshest attacks on it, Plato hints that a form of popular government whose rulers obeyed the law might be acceptable to him. See, for example:

> ... when a democratic city thirsting for reform happens to get bad cup bearers for its leaders, so that it gets drunk by drinking more than it should of the unmixed wine of freedom... all these things together make the citizens' soul so sensitive that if anyone even puts upon himself the least degree of slavery then they become angry and cannot endure it, and in the end... they take no notice of laws, whether written or unwritten, in order to avoid having any master at all. (Plato, 1992a, 562c7 and 563d4)

Two things need to be mentioned in connection with this passage. First, the emphasis in *Republic* VIII is on freedom, not on the form of the constitution. It is more about the nature of the majority of people than about its possession of political power. Second, Plato is not against freedom. He is opposed to irrational "negative" freedom in contrast to rational "positive" freedom. (Isaiah, 1969)[3] Third, he is not even opposed to democratic aspirations. He is not, in other words, opposed to forms of constitutional democracy, but only to deviant forms of direct, unconstitutional, democracy, what we might call today "populism". (Laclau & Mouffe, 2014)[4]

Plato's comments on democracy as a form of government are more explicit in *The Statesman* (*STM*) (Plato, 1992b) and in *The Laws* (*L*) (Plato, 2004). In the first, he distinguishes between two types of democratic regimes, one that is the

[3]The distinction between these two conceptions of freedom was first introduced by Benjamin Constant and more recently commented upon by Isaiah Berlin. I will say more about the distinction later.

[4]A detailed account of populism is given by Ernesto Laclau and Chantale Mouffe. They argue that the main feature of populism is to draw a frontier between opposing factions. This, they say, is true of left-wing populism, too.

worst among the law abiding and the other that is best among those that flaunt the law. Democracy is said to be the worst among the law abiding because in it "sovereignty has been divided out in small portions among a large number of rulers" (Plato, 1992b, 303ab). Thus, in *The Statesman* Plato's views on democracy appear to be more favorable than in *R*. Democracy is faulted not for the rule of the insatiable desire of the many but for the fragmentation of its rule. In *The Laws*, by contrast, Plato argues that pure monarchy and pure democracy are equally deficient. The first is "authoritarian in the highest degree, the other representing an extreme form of liberty" (Plato, 2004, 710e). A correct form of government would, therefore, be a mixture of the two "mother-constitutions" (Plato, 2004, 693d) containing both a moderate form of authoritarianism and moderate freedom (Plato, 2004, 701e). Plato's emphasis on moderation in *The Laws* has implications for what he says about legislation. Instead of using the methods of compulsion and persuasion alternately, the Athenian proposes legislative preambles. The purpose of these preambles is "to make the person to whom he (the legislator) promulgates his orders—the law—in a more co-operative frame of mind" (Plato, 2004, 723a)[5]. This implies a certain amount of involvement by citizens in the process of evaluating the laws they are subjected to.

In *Republic* IV Plato associates the virtue of moderation with the third class, the class of ordinary citizens. In fact, the early books also allow for participation by all citizens in politics, if their soul is balanced. In other words, if it is moderate. In fact, if there is to be harmony within the city, ordinary citizens need to have a co-operative frame of mind regarding legislation. The *Republic* is an elitist work. It has a dim view of the uneducated population. But only in the middle books (Books V-VII) does it advocate possession of highly specialized philosophical knowledge as the condition for political participation.[6] Does this mean that the views expressed in Plato's two major works are incompatible? In my view, only Books V to VII present a view of democracy that is completely negative. The issue is whether any form of participation, not just ruling, in politics, would require special knowledge of philosophy. If by "rule" one means making important decisions, then even today's advocates of democracy could agree that not everyone would qualify for it. This is Aristotle's view, but before turning to him I would like to examine another of Plato's dialogues which has implications for his evaluation of democracy: the *Protagoras* (*P*).

The discussion in the *Protagoras* is also relevant to the question of "preambles", for it introduces the need for training the affects. The main issue in the dialogue is the teachability of (political) virtue. Socrates challenges the famous sophist by noting that according to the Athenians, participation in the assembly, unlike participation in the special arts "is free to get up and give advice (Plato, 1956, 319cd)…

[5]A need for creating a spirit of co-operation as condition for democratic politics is proposed by C. B. MacPherson and Michael Sandel.

[6]The main difference between modern and pre-modern views of the aims of politics centers around the desire for certainty.

evidently, because they are under the impression that this sort of knowledge cannot be taught" (Plato, 1956, 319d). Coming from Socrates this sounds strange. However, Protagoras' reply may help here, for, in his reply (Plato, 1956, 323a) he admits that when people deliberate about political virtue "they think that every one ought to share in that sort of virtue". But, he adds that someone, like himself, is able to promote political virtue more effectively. (Plato, 1956, 327e) Based on Plato's account of the exchange between Socrates and Protagoras one might suppose that the distinction between mere participation in politics and exercising political rule was present in his mind throughout his career. He might have believed that the basic affects (passions) putting citizens in a co-operative frame of mind were available to all of them, but special moral qualities and special training were required for political rule. His advocacy of a mixture of authority and liberty in *The Laws* could represent his general views about the role of the democratic element in politics.

Aristotle's case is somewhat different. He does not hide his commitment to constitutional democracy. For example he says:

> One may hold it as a reasonable criticism to argue that a democracy of this sort (one ruled through decrees and not laws) is not a regime. The law should rule in all matters, while the offices and the regime should judge in particular cases. (Aristotle, 2013, 1292a33)

However, Aristotle's support for constitutionalism is not unconditional. At (Aristotle, 2013, 1286a10) he recognizes that "the best regime is not based on written rules and laws". He might have added "alone", for, while he notes that "the same argument concerning the universal applies also to rulers" because persons, due to their nature, however wise and virtuous they might be, are liable to error. Still, persons may "deliberate in a finer fashion concerning particulars". In the end, he concludes that "the ruler must necessarily be a legislator... and the law must exist". He is ambivalent about who the legislators must be. On the one hand he recognizes that many judges in many matters are better than a single person. But he adds two qualifications: first, the many who make up the deciding body need to be good men. In this way, he implies that a regime ruled by such men would be an aristocracy. Second, and this confirms the view that Aristotle is leaning toward some form of hybrid of democracy and aristocracy, he notes that the free multitude, so long as they are not beasts, should participate in political decision making, without taking part in the greatest offices (Aristotle, 2013: p. 79).

Aristotle's most firm view is that the best regime is where all citizens take turn in ruling and being ruled. He calls such regime a "*politeia*". Politeia is a mixed government in which oligarchic (wealth) and democratic (freedom) values are combined. To put it simply, his views on ruling and being ruled suggests that in a correct regime the wealthy and the poor take turn in ruling and being ruled in accordance with their respective values. He would agree with the Plato of *The Laws* that pure monarchical and pure democratic regimes are both deficient. But he goes a step further in advising those who are planning to make concrete

changes in actually existing societies that they need to reconcile the objectives of the two economically distinct elements: oligarchs and wage earners.

A discussion of Aristotle's views on democracy would be incomplete without taking into account what he says about citizenship. When he speaks of democracy, Aristotle has in mind the sovereign power of free male citizens of a certain age. Hence, a vast majority of a city's population would have no right of citizenship. In fact, the democratic regimes of the ancient Greek world following Solon's reforms were such regimes. So, when one intends to use Athenian democracy and the need for political expertise as a model for clarifying the meaning of modern democracy one needs to keep a number of facts in mind. First, Athenian democracy was a dominantly direct democracy. Second, who citizens were, who had political rights, were a minority of relatively well off, wealthy or wage earning free persons. Third, most philosophers of those days were against purely popular forms of government. They were opposed to rule by decree, and they reserved the highest political and legal functions for those who excelled in civic virtue. Aristotle in his *Politics* moves closer to constitutional democracy than does Plato in any of his major political works.

For many modern thinkers the French Revolution signaled the emergence of democratic rule. But the liberal ideology had its origins in 17th century in constitutional liberalism and what C. B. MacPherson called "possessive individualism"[7]. The resulting regimes of modern mass societies were no longer pure, direct, democracies. They were either constitutional monarchies or liberal democracies.

3. Spinoza

Spinoza, the seventeenth century Dutch philosopher, whose political philosophy was strongly influenced by Hobbes', is thought to be the first modern philosopher to have articulated a defense of democracy. This raises two questions. First, what did Spinoza mean by "democracy" and, second, what he gave as a defense of it. Most of his views on the subject can be found in his two work: *A Theologico-Political Treatise* (1670) and *A Political Treatise* (1677).[8] According to some of Spinoza's interpreters, his two works differ in their perspective on Hobbes' theory of social contract, motivated by his changing views on the ontology and psychology of human agents. (Negri, 1991)[9] For this reason, a brief account of Spinoza's view on "Substance" and on the essence of singular things is necessary as a prelude to evaluating his contribution to the issue of democracy.

For Spinoza, God is infinite substance, the undivided power of nature. Singular things are not numerically distinct from infinite substance, they are modes if it. In their modal essence they are the expression of a finite degree of God's infinite

[7]In his major historical work, *The Theory of Possessive Individualism*, MacPherson discusses the views of Hobbes and Locke, as advocates of possessive individualism.

[8]Since both works are collected in the R. H. M. Elves edition, I include reference to each by the title of the work as well as the page numbers in Elves.

[9]A. Negri, for example, argues in his *Savage Anomaly*, that the change in Spinoza's political views was the result of his more mature metaphysical theory developed in the *Ethics* (1674) (Spinoza, 1996).

power. Thus, God's power is immanent to, and is constituted by the dynamic interrelation of singular essences: its modes. Being the totality of all that exists, substance exists necessarily in accordance with its own nature. Singular things, by contrast, have to strive to preserve their existence. This striving, *conatus,* is their essence. There are a number of political/psychological implications of this ontology. One is that since the power of nature and of singular things is an expression of God's infinite power, the natural right of individuals is coextensive with their power (Spinoza, 1951: pp. 200-201). An even more expressly political implication of this ontology is that infinite substance is not transcendent to finite things. Its power is (self-)constituted by the collective power of its modes. This may be one reason that Spinoza considers democracy the most natural of constitutions (Spinoza, 1951: p. 207). For, if one thinks of the state on the analogy of God, one may conclude that the sovereign power of the state is constituted by the totality of its members: the multitude. And this may, also, be the reason he considers democracy also the most rational form of government.

In their natural state all human beings are guided by the same primary passions (affects). In that regard they are equal. However, in the state of nature reason is not completely absent. Why else would individuals unite together in civil society? To preserve oneself in existence is the most fundamental desire (affect) of all human beings. So, while their passions and desires cause conflict among single individuals, their desire to remain in existence will lead to co-operation. On p. 296-7 of *A Political Treatise*, in the context of discussing natural rights, Spinoza seems to contradict himself. On the one hand he says that "men are naturally enemies", but in the next page he says that he agrees with calling men "social animals". But the contradiction can be avoided if one takes into account that even in the state of nature men are not completely independent of one another. That is why they are afraid of one another, envious and jealous of one another; in short, enemies of one another. But they fear solitude more than they fear other men. That makes them sociable. Sociability, the need for co-operation, leads men to be guided by reason. It teaches them to move from strictly private, negative, freedom to positive freedom. The practice of co-operation teaches them that their own freedom requires that others be free also. Spinoza's implicit communitarianism explains his favoring democracy over all other form of constitution. For, in it all citizens have equal power to participate in political decision making, thereby enhancing their power, their freedom and their understanding.[10]

To sum up, in Spinoza's view the democratic state is most natural because it maintains, even enhances, the natural power of individuals. And it is most rational because it wields all its power as a whole, thereby moderating the more harmful passions which could present an obstacle to achieving rational freedom, both for

[10]The love of God, according to Spinoza, means the striving to understand the dynamic interrelations constituting the totality of nature, including ones place in it. This ontological insight translated into political terms means that under the guide of reason individual citizens strive to understand the global interrelations within the State and their place in it.

individuals and for the State. However, there are two problems Spinoza's advocacy of democracy needs to address. First, is Spinoza, one might ask, not too optimistic about the co-operation of citizens resulting in harmonious, rational, consensus? Is it not possible that a multitude of individuals would unite in combining their most harmful passions, leading to the formation of violent self-destructive mobs that even Spinoza himself was afraid of? In my view, there is no easy answer to that question. Experience has shown that destructive mobs can emerge within democratic societies. But it could be argued in support of Spinoza that without the provocation by unscrupulous leaders, that would not happen. But one may still ask, why are demagogues successful in fanning the flames of fear and hatred? The most optimistic defense of democratic regimes may be that they are, in Churchill's words, the best among the worst. It may also be suggested that in the long run democratic regimes will, in fact, lead to more freedom through greater understanding of the power of passions, and their hold over human behavior.

The second problem Spinoza's account needs to address is how he can reconcile his glowing praise of individual freedom with his insistence that sovereign powers must be obeyed. In order to respond to this challenge Spinoza's texts need to be looked at more closely.

> Contracts or laws whereby the multitude transfers its rights to one council or man, should without doubt be broken, when it is expedient for the general welfare to do so. But to decide this point, whether, that is, it be expedient for the general welfare to break them or not, is within the right of no private person, but of him only who holds dominion. (Spinoza, 1951: pp. 311-312)

This passage simply confirms Spinoza's conception of positive freedom, and his implicit communitarianism. As a liberal and a democrat, Spinoza must allow all free members of the commonwealth to participate in political decision making. That is their way of expressing their comments and criticisms. But, it is the assembly of citizens, the multitude, alone that has the right to make final decisions. His notion of absolute dominion further clarifies the compatibility between freedom and obedience:

> ...the dominion conferred on a large enough council is absolute, or approaches nearest to the absolute. For if there be any absolute dominion, it is, in fact, that which is held by an entire multitude. (Spinoza, 1951: p. 347)

Still, does Spinoza's faith in the constitutive power of the multitude not allow for the tyranny of the majority in a democratic context? A passage in *TPT* seems to address this question. "In (a democracy) no one transfers his natural right so absolutely that he has no further voice in affairs, he only hands it over to the majority of a society, whereof he is a unit. Thus, all men remain, as they were in the state of nature, equal" (Spinoza, 1951: p. 207). But, what if someone is not a member of the majority? This raises the further question whether Spinoza favored a direct or a representative democracy. His belief in the absolute authority of the

law implies that once the law is enacted all must obey it. As a result everyone would be equal under the law. This sounds like echoes of the Bolshevik doctrine of the dictatorship of the proletariat, in particular, its notion of democratic centralism. Democratic centralism means that once the debate is over, the minority, those who have lost, must obey the decisions of the victorious majority. But unlike the Bolsheviks, Spinoza does not identify the proletariat as a permanent majority. He speaks of a multitude whose opinions may vary from time to time. But while opinions may change, in a democracy the multitude remains the same. It is the whole population.

It is not clear whether Spinoza views the multitude as a homogeneous entity united in their beliefs. Direct democracy would work if the multitude were homogeneous. It would, then, behave as a unified individual whose components were all united in one purpose: the pursuit of peace, well being and security. However, members of a commonwealth have different desires (affects) occasionally causing conflicts. So, the main virtue of democratic regimes is that in them conflicts are never resolved once and for all. As new desires emerge so too, does the possibility for conflicts. This is what periodic debates about priorities allow. Would these debates be resolved by referendum or by parliamentary elections choosing the side in the debate that a majority prefers?

It is generally believed that Spinoza did not give a satisfactory account of how a democratic regime would work in practice due to his premature passing away. This might be the best explanation for the missing account. Still, given his detailed analysis of the politics of monarchic and aristocratic regimes in the unfinished work, especially the attention he pays to the fundamental role of democratic elements must pay in both of them, one may wonder what more he could have said about the practicalities of democratic governance. It is plausible to assume, based on the earlier chapters of *A Political Treatise* and Chapter Sixteen of *A Theologico-Political Treatise*, that he may have opted for a form of constitutionalism not excluding a liberal form of constitutional monarchy in which the multitude is consulted and is allowed to have a voice.[11] His frequent comments about the unruly mob, and his forceful defense of the rule of law, indicate that he might not have looked favorably on direct democracy, sharing his skepticism about it with Plato and Aristotle.

[11]The issue for him, as it was for Aristotle, is one of citizenship. His preferred version of a democratic regime is "wherein all, without exception, who owe allegiance to the laws of the country, and are further independent and of respectable life, have the right of voting in the supreme council and filling offices of the dominion" (*PT*, p. 386). This is an echo of Aristotle's view on the rule of the multitude. Aristotle believes that "having them take part in the greatest offices is not safe. But, on the other hand, "to give them no part and for them to have no part in the offices is a matter for alarm… What is left, then, is for them is to take part in deliberating and judging." (*Politics*, p. 79) There are, however, differences in the views of the two philosophers. First, Aristotle's reason for including the multitude in deliberating and judging is negative. He fears that if they were not included they might revolt. Spinoza's reason for including the multitude in all political deliberation is positive because it would make them better citizens. Second, Spinoza would not have insisted that in his version of democracy citizens taking part in the greatest offices would need to have special qualification.

4. Hegel

Nearly a hundred and fifty years separate the appearance of Spinoza's political works and Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* (*PR*). But the differences between their views on democracy are not as great as it might first appear. In his discussions of monarchy Spinoza suggests that even non-democratic regimes could have democratic elements within them. And, in spite of his preference for democracy as the best political regime there are reasons to think that he might also have opted for a form of constitutional monarchy as a viable political system. When the king dies, he suggests,

> "the civil state returns to the state of nature, and consequently the supreme authority to the multitude which can, therefore, lawfully lay down new and abolish old laws. And so it appears that no man succeeds the king by right, but him whom the multitude wills to be successor… We might likewise infer this from the fact that the king's sword, or right is in reality the will of the multitude itself" (Spinoza, 1951: p. 340).

Balibar, a great expert on Spinoza' political philosophy, notes that while Spinoza did hold democracy as the best political system he put emphasis on the process of democratization which contributes to making non-democratic forms the best they can be. (Balibar, 1998: p. 75)[12]

Hegel, a proponent of constitutional monarchy, is not a defender of democratic form of governments. But he might be thought of as a kind of liberal, advocating a form of rational (positive) freedom. In spite of his contempt for the lawless mob (calls them the "rabble") he is not consistently hostile to some form of popular participation in the affairs of the state. He is in support of a limited form of monarchy (Hegel, 1971: p. 176).[13] The monarch is accountable to his advisers, those who have knowledge about the structure of the state. And both the monarch and his advisers are accountable to the legislature composed of an organized assembly of citizens: the monarch, his ministers and the Estates. This way, one finds within the legislature the monarch: the ultimate subject of decision, the executive and

[12]Balibar, one of the most acute interpreters of Spinoza's political philosophy, suggests that the process of democratization in non-democratic regimes, may go as far as making "the juridical distinction between a 'monarchy' or an 'aristocracy' on the one hand, and a 'democracy' on the other, prove to be purely abstract and formal" (Balibar, 1988: p. 75).

[13]In fact, echoes of Hegel's constitutional monarchy can also be heard in recent discussions of liberal democracy. For example, Fareed Zakaria in his "The Rise of Illiberal Democracy" suggests that the road to liberal democracy was paved by liberal autocracies (Zakaria, 1997: p. 29) where the franchise was tightly restricted and elected legislatures had little power. "Only in the late 1940's, he says, did most western countries become full-fledged democracies with universal suffrage, but one' hundred years earlier, by the late 1840's most of them have adopted important aspects of constitutional liberalism - the rule of law, private property rights and free speech and assembly." (p. 29) Zakaria also notes that in societies where democracy does not yet exist it is better to start with authoritarian liberalism than with unlimited democracy: the road from authoritarian constitutional liberalism to liberal democracy is easier than the road from pure democracy. More often than not, the latter leads to illiberal democracy.

civil servants, landed aristocrats and representatives various citizens groups.[14]

In his *Philosophy of Right* (Hegel, 1971: p. 177) Hegel refers to Montesquieu's doctrine of the separation of powers, but warns that the above mentioned components of the State: the monarch, the executive and the Estates, are not to be seen as adversaries but as instruments of mediation (Montesquieu, 1758). This is what he says about the different forms of government:

Which is the better form of government, monarchy or democracy? We may only say that all constitutional forms are one sided unless they can sustain in themselves the principle of free subjectivity and know how to correspond with a mature rationality (Hegel, 1971: p. 286).

In other words, "It is quite idle to inquire which of the three (monarchy, aristocracy, democracy) is most to be preferred. Such forms must be discussed historically" (*PR*: p. 177) This comment could have been received favorably by Spinoza. He also held that what form of government is best cannot be decided abstractly, specific historical/practical considerations need to be taken into account.

As a fierce opponent of the liberal cult of the solitary individual, Hegel rejects representative democracy." The Estates (the last moment in the legislature) have the function of bringing public affairs into existence not only implicitly, but actually, *i.e.* of bringing into existence the moment of subjective formal freedom, the public consciousness as an empirical universal, of which the thoughts and opinions of the Many are particulars" (Hegel, 1971: p. 195). Delegates of the Estates provide additional insight into "the more pressing and more specialized needs and deficiencies which are directly in their view" and they also "anticipate criticism from the Many" (*PR*, S301: p. 196). Still, delegates do not express their own views, nor do they represent the views of aggregates of isolated individuals. They put forth the interests of special constituencies: the agricultural class, the corporations, and public servants. And the fact that the monarch and its ministers are present in the legislature means that special interests are complemented by the interest of the state as a whole.[15]

With his discussion of the Corporations and citizens' associations Hegel comes close to a form of direct democracy. Corporations decide as separate groups on what their specific contribution to the state should be and who is to speak for it in the legislature. Given their relatively small size and the limited focus of their deliberations, these deliberations would involve a form of direct democracy.[16] The participation of citizens in Corporations and other citizen associations would con-

[14]Hegel is not clear on the subject, but a distinction needs to be made between ministers and civil servants. Civil servants are bureaucrats. They are occupied with the day to day running of the government, but it is the ministers who make executive decisions and advise the monarch directly. Civil servants are part of the estates. Hegel calls them "the universal class".

[15]In this sense Hegel's theory of the State is closer to modern parliamentary systems than to modern presidential systems.

[16]Of the three Estates: the landed aristocracy, the business class and civil servants, it is only the second that sends delegates to the assembly. As agencies of the business class, they chose their delegates through direct selection.

stitute a democratic element in Hegel's theory of the state.[17] Nevertheless, the emphasis he puts on the political importance of the landed nobility, on the priority of managers within Corporations, and on the supervisory role of the crown and its ministers play deciding the manner in which special interest are to accord with the general interests of the state, prevents Corporations from playing by themselves, a direct democratic role in the legislature.[18]

The question one might ask at this point is how close Hegel's version of constitutional monarchy is to constitutional (liberal) democracies as they exist today, and how what he says could inspire a possible reform of the latter. The answer depends on how one understand what he says about the role of the monarch in what he considers the most rational form of government. According to some interpreters, Hegel's monarch has less power than presidents of contemporary states have. It has only to sign his name, cross the "*t's* and dot the *i's*". Following Zakaria's critique of illiberal democracy, and keeping in mind that today's liberal democracies contain significant authoritarian elements, one might look favorably on Hegel's concept of constitutional monarchy. In spite of its elitist perspective, his proposal contains a number of attractive elements. It brings attention to the fact that isolated individuals vulnerable to manipulation by demagogues could, in the worst case, be entrusted with political rule. To avert mob rule he proposes the establishment of Corporations that would produce knowledgeable individuals who can grasp the needs of the state as a whole and can, at the same time, understand how their particular case fits into it. He also recognizes the need for wise ministers who would give advice to the monarch and would, at the same time, select and supervise competent and conscientious civil servants. And, finally, he recognizes the need, in the person of a monarch, for an agent with the power of final decision who would prevent endless debates among his adviser about matters that cannot be resolved simply by rational means.[19] A number of twentieth century philosophers also address the need for an executive power to make ultimate

[17]As he suggests (Hegel, 1971: p. 200) the rational form of the democratic element is based not on the participation of single persons in the affairs of the state, but on their participation as members of groups: associations, communities, and Corporations, "which although constituted already for other purposes, acquire, in this way, a connection with politics" (Hegel, 1971: p. 203).

[18]Although Hegel is not clear on the relation of Corporations to other assemblies, there are a number of passages indicating that he recognized assemblies other than Corporations. Take, for example, the following: "Assemblies, open to the public, are a great spectacle and an excellent education for the citizens … It is that there first begin to develop the virtues, abilities, dexterities, which have to serve as examples to the public." (Hegel, 1971: p. 294) This comment anticipates recent defenses of Civic Republicanism. One might say, following Hegel, that local associations play an important role in educating citizens in republican virtues. I shall say more of this later in connection with Michael Sandel.

[19]It makes sense to see the decision of the monarch as resolving issues whose resolution could not be achieved by further deliberation on the part of knowledgeable advisers. Namely, situations may arise where no further reasonable consideration could tip the balance one way or anther. Equally good arguments could be offered by each side. The question, then, is why the monarch; why a human subject. Why not just to role the dice? Hegel' response to this question assumes that the figure of the monarch has been invested with an aura of majesty. So, its decision is sacred regardless of the personal qualification it has. This is an example where Hegel seems to value affect over reason.

decisions in case of emergencies.

5. Macpherson

The twentieth century thinker who does not share Zakaria's enthusiastic defense of liberalism is C. B. MacPherson. He also sees liberalism as a forerunner of liberal democracy, but, in his view, liberalism in its pre-democratic, authoritarian, version was an instrument of the bourgeois capitalist class.[20] He sees more of possessive individualism than egalitarianism in the liberal ideology of the 17th century. At the beginning of his essay, *The Life and Times of Liberal Democracy* he poses the question: "is liberal democracy... to be considered so nearly finished that one may presume now to sketch its life and times?" His answer is a qualified "Yes" if it is taken to mean "a society striving to ensure that all its members are equally free to realize their capabilities" (MacPherson, 1977: p. 1) So, according to MacPherson, the difficulty of giving a favorable account of liberal democracy is that it had its beginning early in the 19th century by accepting the basic assumptions of the capitalist market ideology which was only qualified later in the century by John Stuart Mill and liberal neo-hegelians who added to it an ethical dimension.[21]

In the same work, MacPherson proposes four models of liberal democracy: protective democracy, developmental democracy, equilibrium democracy and participatory democracy. The first, advocated by Bentham and James Mill in the early 19th century supported democratic politics in order to protect market capitalism against possible attacks from an impoverished, and disenfranchised majority of the population. It saw no positive value in democracy as such. Instead, by tacitly endorsing the Hobbesian/Lockean ideology of possessive individualism it gave the voting public the illusion that they are partners in promoting the capitalist system. The second model, represented by John Stuart Mill, had an ethical dimension. This version of democratic theory aimed at promoting personal development, supporting individuals to achieve their potentials through meaningful work and co-operation with one another. The third model, the one that dominates contemporary politics today, seeks to achieve social equilibrium by applying the method of economics to politics, treating citizens as consumers of political choices offered to them by the political elite. The fourth model, as the third model was of the first, is a revised version of the second. MacPherson calls this "participatory democracy". It aims to correct the weakness of the second, of its failure to address the real obstacles of human development: the capitalist market system. Participation, as MacPherson sees it, can happen on multiple levels, party politics, local organizations or workers' control of certain aspects of production. He saw signs of this in the slogans of the New Left student movement and in the rise of "movements

[20]Zakaria's view of liberalism is inseparable from his support for the capitalist market economy.

[21]MacPherson's indirect debt to Hegel is reflected in his critique of possessive individualism and his advocacy of an ethic of positive (rational) freedom. His criticism of J. S. Mill and of Hegel's liberal liberal followers is that they fail to see the incompatibility of the capitalist system with their ethical principle.

for workers' control in industry" (MacPherson, 1977: p. 93).

MacPherson evaluates liberal democracy from a Marxist perspective, putting more value on its democratic (equality) than on its liberal (individual freedom) component. So, when he holds out hope for a renewed ethical version of it he has in mind a society whose members are not only free and equal formally but are equal concretely: having real opportunities for realizing their potentials.[22] Fifty years after MacPherson's optimistic predictions about the realization of a social liberal democracy his hopes seem to have been frustrated.[23] His Model 3 in its current form of neo-liberalism is more entrenched today than it ever was. But, as I will show next, there are still, progressive thinkers who are willing to carry the torch he has lit in the mid 1970's. Like MacPherson, these thinkers adopt a post-Marxist position. They see value in Marx's critique of capitalist market ideology, but they abandon some of the optimistic prediction traditional Marxists made about transcending it. Similarly, new attempts to rethink liberal democracy lean toward incorporating elements of social justice in it.

6. Mouffe and Schmitt

Chantale Mouffe, in her 1989 essay: "On the Articulation between Liberalism and Democracy"[24] recognizes that MacPherson's optimism about the transformation of the liberal-democratic market society was premature. As she says "Alas, twenty five years later the wind seems to be blowing in the other direction, but she continues, … This does not mean, of course that MacPherson was mistaken in calling for the development of what he referred to as a 'liberal democratic socialism'. I think that today such a theory is more needed than ever" (Mouffe, 2005: p. 102). In her attempt to continue MacPherson's project she calls for the struggle to achieve a "radical liberal democracy". Namely, the attempt to redefine socialism in terms of a radical and plural democracy.

I will turn to Mouffe's post-Marxist theory of liberal democracy in a moment. However, before doing that a few words, I feel, need to be said about another early twentieth century critic of liberal democracy: the right-wing legal philosopher, Carl Schmitt. Schmitt had made his mark on the debate about liberal democracy by arguing that liberalism and democracy were incompatible.[25] In spite of their fundamental disagreements on key issues, I find Schmitt's defense of direct democracy relevant to evaluating Mouffe's position on democracy. Her arguments against Schmitt will also reveal her own reservations about current conceptions of liberal democracy.

[22]Macpherson emphasizes being producers rather than just consumers of social, economic and political goods.
[23]Along with signs of greater participation MacPherson saw increase in capacities for providing general wealth. He was, perhaps, not sensitive enough to the ecological problems induced by the growth in industrial production.
[24]This article appears in *The Return of the Political*.
[25]His most detailed analysis of the relation between liberalism and democracy is given in: *The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy*, first published in 1923.

Mouffe takes Schmitt's views seriously. In fact, her project is to turn his wide ranging critique of liberalism against itself. This requires that she embrace some of Schmitt's controversial claims. But one gets a clearer idea of Mouffe's affinities with Schmitt by looking closely at the fundamental differences that separate them. To begin with, Mouffe disagrees with Schmitt's claim that there is an inherent contradiction between liberalism and democracy, and that liberal democracy is an untenable hybrid. Her view is that there is not a contradiction but rather a creative tension between its two fundamental principles: freedom and equality, making liberal democratic regimes worth fighting for.[26] The key to her position is the inclusion of pluralism, an essentially liberal notion, in the liberal democratic complex. What is innovative in her appeal to pluralism is her rejection of individualism which is usually associated with it.[27] In this, she shares Schmitt's rejection of classical Enlightenment liberalism without, at the same time, sharing his rejection of pluralism. The plurality she focuses on is that of groups sharing particular ethical values, biases and affects.[28]

Mouffe's most important agreement with Schmitt concerns what he says about "the political". In this view, the political, in contrast to the ethical, the religious and the aesthetic, is a fundamentally public phenomenon at the heart of which is a struggle for power. In this struggle, the mobilization of affects plays a more important role than do rational debates. She agrees with Schmitt that liberal democracy as a political regime presupposes the antagonism among a plurality of (heterogeneous) groups fighting for different, and at times conflicting, political agendas.[29] In the process of these antagonistic struggles, she believes, new group identities will emerge. Mouffe calls her reformulation of the democratic project "radical democracy". This new project involves emphasizing the different, the particular, the multiple and the heterogeneous. (Mouffe, 2005: p. 13) At the same time, her notion of radical democratic citizenship implies a common political identity, "a collective identification with a radical interpretation of the fundamental prin-

[26]For Mouffe, the relation between liberalism and democracy is contingent. Their unity is not given. It has to be fought for.

[27]Mouffe's emphasis on pluralism is indebted to Rawls. See, for example: "The great merit of Rawls consists in stressing that in modern democratic societies where there is no longer a single substantive common good and where pluralism is central, a political conception of justice cannot be derived from one particular religious, moral or philosophical conception of the good life." But this insight is compromised because "… his reliance on a liberal individualistic conception of the subject impedes him from thinking of the subject as discursively constructed through the multiplicity of language games in which a social agent is constructed" (Mouffe, 2005: p. 55).

[28]One of her main criticism of the Enlightenment tradition is its emphasis on reason in opposition to affects (passions). This view she shares with Schmitt and with Spinoza. But, in accord with Spinoza, she does not reject, as does Schmitt, the importance of reason in political conflicts. She only believes that consideration of affects should take precedence over it.

[29]According to her, "To envisage politics as a rational process of deliberation among individuals is to obliterate the whole dimension of power and antagonism - what I call 'the political' - and thereby completely miss its nature...Liberalism overlooks the fact that [politics] concerns the construction of collective identities and the creation of a 'we' as opposed to 'them'. Politics, as the attempt to domesticate the political, to keep at bay the forces of destruction and establish order, always to do with conflicts and antagonisms." (Mouffe, 2005: p. 140).

ciples of liberal democracy: liberty and equality". (Mouffe, 2005: p. 71) These two principles can be interpreted in different ways determining what it means to be a liberal democrat. For that reason, there could be socialist, capitalist and christian liberal democracies, as long as they respect the principles of freedom and equality. The specificity of the radical interpretation is that it puts emphasis on "the numerous social relations in which situations of dominance exist that must be challenged if the principles of liberty and equality are to apply" (Mouffe, 2005: p.84)[30]. This would "lead to the articulation of democratic demands found in a variety of involvements: women, workers, blacks, ecological as well as other new social movements".[31] Still, the question remains: How does Mouffe's analysis clarify the notion of democracy?

It is now time to come back to the question of the meaning of democracy today. For Zakaria it means free and fair elections and the acceptance of their results. This narrow definition leaves out of account the political goals of democracy, namely, the achievement of popular sovereignty and equality. Carl Schmitt's views on this matter might help here, too. In his view, in the epoch of mass democracy, given the heterogeneity of the people, the real equality of those who make up the electorate, is lost. The combination of the ideas of liberalism and democracy within liberal democracy results, according to him, in replacing real equality among members of a homogeneous community with an abstract equality of mankind. For that reason, democracy understood as liberal democracy is a liberal and not an authentically democratic idea. As I will suggest later, Schmitt's idea of democracy, based on the real equality of members of a homogeneous community is echoed in right-wing populist discourse. In addition, Schmitt's contention that the political is marked by the friend/enemy relation could play a role in right-wing vilification of immigrants whom they consider "the other" "the unequal" and "the enemy" *par excellence.*

Mouffe agrees with much of Schmitt's critique of liberal democracy understood as parliamentary democracy. She also sees that in mass democracies parliament is a site of partisan negotiations among parties (factions) that have become pressure groups calculating their mutual interests and their opportunities for attaining

[30]Mark Lilla, in his *The Once and Future Liberal* questions the political efficacy of what he calls "identity politics". Progressive initiatives are, in his view, compromised by fragmenting progressive movements. He does not name Mouffe specifically, but his reference (Lilla, 2007: p.126) to the "Verso Press" suggests that he had her also in mind. But Mouffe distances herself from identity politics which she distinguishes from the radical democratic, non-essentialist, conception of identity formation. In her view identities are not given prior to political struggles, they are constituted in the process of struggle. This is how she puts it: "...the approach I am defending, the aim of a radical democratic citizenship should be the construction of a common political identity that would create the conditions for the establishment of a new hegemony articulated through new egalitarian social relations and, practices and institutions. This cannot be achieved without the transformation of existing subject positions." (Mouffe, 2005: p. 86). One might say that both Lilla and Mouffe reject identity politics as a form of essentialism. See, for example, Lilla, 2007: p.126.

[31]Mouffe's notion of radical democracy contains two elements. First, it advocates for the pluralism of group subjects, not of individual subjects. Second, it is radical because it shares Marx's opposition to the capitalist economic system.

power. But she does not advocate, as does Schmitt, for a pure, direct form, of democracy. In her view, the parliamentary system, along with more direct forms of power struggle, could have a role to play in radical democracy. Also, she wishes to keep the liberal notion of pluralism as a vital component in a revised version of liberal democracy. In the end, for Mouffe, radical democracy is inseparable from pluralism. But to make it a truly revolutionary alternative to both classical liberal democracy and to its reductionist orthodox Marxist critique, it needs to reformulate pluralism and it needs to reconstitute the diverse elements contained within it. As a result, this would allow her to re-invent the socialist democratic project.[32] The new antagonism among the plurality of forces is no longer seen simply as between stable pre-given economic classes. Instead, it is characterized by the antagonism between dominating and dominated collective subjects. This conception of democratic struggles is not simply a struggle of a people for sovereign power, it is, rather, a number of struggles against different forms of oppression, the guiding principles of which must be freedom and equality. The challenge here is to create a hegemonic equivalence out of different heterogeneous demands.

It is not clear whether Schmitt was advocating for homogeneous regimes or was simply offering an analysis of what he thought was a coherent concept of democratic equality. The history of his involvement with the Nazi movement suggests that he saw the formation of a homogeneous nation state as a desirable possibility.[33] The same question could also be put to Mouffe: How much of what she says is a description of what contemporary democracy might look like, and how much of it is a prescription for a political project.[34] In Schmitt's account of modern mass democracy a recognition of the proliferation of diverse religious, cultural and ethnic groups is missing. Therefore, achieving hegemony presents a bigger challenge than he thinks. Mouffe's emphasis on the plurality of group identities is a more adequate response to actually existing political reality. By the same token, Schmitt's

[32]The project of articulating a new, post Marxist, form of social-liberal-democratic radicalism is first introduced in her joint work with Ernesto Laclau.

[33]In his *Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy* (*CPD*) Schmitt suggests that there is a tension between two aspects of the democratic principle: its empirical, quantitative, aspect and its substantive, qualitative one. Due to the conflict between its two aspects, democracy might be used against itself (Schmitt, 1988: p. 28). In order to stay true to its substantive goal a minority, and even one single citizen, may override the vote of a numerical majority. This is what Schmitt calls the "Jacobin logic", namely "the authoritative identification of a minority as the people" In other words, "democracy is helpless before the Jacobin argument" (Schmitt, 1988: p. 31). So, when Schmitt says that a formal democracy is compatible with a dictatorial content he opens the door to claiming that a charismatic leader (*Fuehrer*) could express the true "democratic" aspirations of a united people.

[34]In her most recent book, *Towards a Green Democratic Revolution* (*TGDR*), Mouffe suggests that "the articulation of anti-neo-liberal and ecological struggles needs to mobilize affects of political and ecological nature whose articulation can result in the construction of a people". This is her version of left -wing populism. How successful this could be as an effective political programme depends on how the anti-neoliberal and ecological struggles can be combined. How, for example, the link between finance capital and damage to the environment can be demonstrated in popular language. How, in other words, can the activation of affects of fear and anger be combined with an anti-capitalist analysis rooted in Marxist political economy. This presents a serious challenge in societies where most citizens are hostile to any political intervention in economics: a basic challenge facing left-wing populism in most western societies.

emphasis on democratic homogeneity might be a response to the need felt by large elements within nation states to what they perceive as a threat to their linguistic and cultural identity. So, the dilemma readers of the Schmitt and Mouffe debate are facing is how much weight to be put on impartial (philosophical) analysis of the current situation in terms of universal, basically liberal, norms, and how much weight to be put on demands for concrete, particular, remedies for hardships caused by economic exploitation and the erosion of traditional forms of life.

A part of Mouffe's debt to Schmitt's critique of liberalism concerns his rejection of rationalism. As a result, her critique of the Left focuses on its neglect of the political power of affects (passions)[35], and their exclusive reliance on reason. She is not an anti-rationalist. In her view, reason does have an important role along with passions. But her focus is on collective political affects and not simply on their individual expression. This is how she puts it: "My reflection concerns a certain type of affects, those I call 'passions'. By 'passions' I designate the *common* affects that are at stake in the formation of we/they forms of identification, (Mouffe, 2022: p. 41) In fact, she puts emphasis on "how right-wing discourse encourages resentment against migrants who are construed as the enemy and whose presence is responsible for their wrongs" (Mouffe, 2022: p. 43).

In an attempt to explain resentment as a distorted articulation of anger caused by social injustice Mouffe seems to ignore the fact that the attraction to what liberals consider as negative political attitudes, such as nationalism, might also be caused by positive factors, namely, by one's passionate attachment to one's country, to one's native tongue, to one's history and to one's fellow countrymen.[36] In the context of discussing how, and why, right-wing political discourse was successful in the Germany of the 1930's, she recalls E. Bloch's observation (*TGDR*, p.44) that the Nazis were more successful than the Social Democrats in harnessing people's fears and hopes. Given her attention to the force of passions in politics, she might have examined why the Nazi's were more able to exploit them. Was it because it is easier to rally people around simplistic slogans? Or, did they capture something more concrete about how Germans felt about their situation at the time that escaped the abstract internationalism of the Left?

According to Mouffe, what binds democratic citizens together is their common

[35]In paying tribute to Spinoza, Mouffe underlines the importance of affects for democratic theory (Mouffe, 2022: p. 47): "What moves people to act are affects, and while ideas are indeed important, their power depends on being connected to affects. The pursuit of an ideal of rationality free from affects, which is the aim of so much of (liberal) democratic theory, beside being self-defeating theoretical enterprise, has disastrous consequences when it is taken as a guide for political practice."

[36]To be fair, in the interview with Klemperer (Klemperer, 2021) (*Interview*) Mouffe recognizes the affective power of patriotism (Mouffe, 2021). In her reply to the question: "Does the left need to make more use of nationalist sentiment?" she replies: "I prefer the use of the term patriotism. I believe in the need for what I call a 'left-wing patriotism' because patriotism is a very strong affect. So if you want to mobilize people, you need to acknowledge that. But she adds: "...you can mobilize it in a progressive way… or you can also mobilize it against immigrants". What she neglects to note is that people may be strongly against a certain form of immigration policy but not be against immigrants. For example, many immigration protesters at the Western train station in Budapest brought to the migrants, out of compassion for them, blankets and food.

recognition of a set ethico-political values" (Mouffe, 2005: p. 69). But when it comes to naming those values she mentions only the two fundamental principles of liberal democracy: liberty and equality. However, there is more to shared ethico-political values than the values of liberty and equality. It has also to do with the power of affects, regarding a common history, a common language and a shared territory. Admittedly, these values are under pressure in multicultural mass democracies. Still, they do not cease to be sources of identification. What is needed is a delicate balance of these values with the fact that most modern nation states contain citizens with different cultural, linguistic and religious backgrounds. Therefore, in forging a social bond in pluralistic societies the content of citizens' political education needs to include more than just the most abstract principles of liberal democracy. They need to cultivate republican virtues beyond freedom and equality.

Michael Sandel, an advocate of Civic Republicanism has a more substantial account of citizenship than does Mouffe. They both reject narrow liberalism. But, Sandel criticizes what he calls "procedural liberalism" for its failure to recognize the importance of deliberating moral and religious issues within a political context. In short, he deplores the liberal rejection of discussions of what might contribute to the common good. He is not an absolute opponent of liberalism. He, like Mouffe, also wants to reconcile liberalism and democracy. But, his approach is focused on the question of the conditions of making democracy more effective in the modern context than on radicalizing it. In his view, which is reminiscent of Aristotle's Civic Republicanism, soul-craft is an essential aspect of state-craft. Anticipating liberal criticisms, Sandel argues that exclusion and coercion are not essential features of the formative project he advocates for democratic Civic Republicanism. Instead of excluding those deemed to be unqualified for citizenship, or coercing them to acquire the required political qualifications, as the Jacobin logic would demand, he calls for experiments with civic virtue in local assemblies. That is his suggestion for reconciling the ideals of liberalism and democracy. "The civic strand of freedom, he says, is not necessarily exclusive or coercive. It can sometimes find democratic, pluralistic expression" (Sandel, 1998: p. 321). Liberty, in his view, cannot be detached from the exercise of self-government. Echoing Spinoza he notes that "Some have argued that good citizens are made, not found". "The republican, he says, begins by asking how citizens can be capable of self-government, and seeks the political forms and social conditions that promotes its meaningful exercise." (Sandel, 1998: p. 27) This is the project Sandel proposes.[37] And while his adversary: procedural liberalism, is still the dominant public philosophy today, "[a] round the edges, he says, of our political discourse and practice hints of the formative project can still be glimpsed". (Sandel, 1998: p. 324) In con-

[37]If she has Sandel in mind, her criticism that Civic Republicanism reifies the idea of the Common Good is misguided. Civic Republicanism is for him, too, a project for enabling civic virtue: the exercise of self-government. In this way, his formative political project resembles C. B. MacPherson's call for participatory democracy.

crete terms, the formative project means that "[the] relation of the individual to the nation [is] not direct but mediated by decentralized forms of political association and participation". (*Discontent*: p. 27)

Schmitt believes that a true democracy requires true equality among its citizens. He endorses the Australian commonwealth's restricting entry to certain migrants. (Schmitt, 1988: p. 9) He supports restrictive immigration policies in the name of achieving homogeneity. For him, an authentic democracy presupposes substantive equality that can be found in "certain physical and moral qualities, for example, in civic virtue, in *arete,* the classical democracy of *vertus* (*vertu*)". Understanding equality, not in terms of physical qualities but as shared civic virtue, substantive equality could play an essential role in democratic citizenship. But liberal democrats do not need to endorse strictly exclusive immigration laws in order to safeguard civic national unity. They might accept that a sovereign nation impose certain measures with a view to preserving the integrity of its interpretation of its fundamental principles. In addition, they might accept that a state must impose limits on the sphere of application of its laws. Equality under the law cannot extend beyond the borders of nation states. Immigrants need to be welcome within states they seek as asylums. But, when they apply for permanent citizenship they need to shift their political allegiance from their old to their new home country. Instead of rejecting immigrants or, on the other hand, offering them unrestrained individual freedom, host states need to find ways of valuing the new comers' unique contribution so long as those contributions are consistent with the basic norms of the new legal/political environment.[38] By introducing a new social and cultural dynamics into the culture of the host society, immigration does introduce the potential for a healthy and revitalized political community.[39]

In view of all this, we can come back to Zakaria's complaint about democratic regimes that reject liberal norms. Macpherson, Schmitt and Mouffe's critiques of liberal democracy puts illiberal democracy in a different light from his. As we have seen, each of these philosophers have negative things to say about some key aspects of liberalism. Schmitt and Mouffe reproach liberalism for its excessive reliance on abstract rationalism ignoring the passions motivating political subjects. Macpherson and Mouffe find the complicity between liberalism and capitalism resulting in unjust and undemocratic politics. All three find the link between liberalism and democracy, as it is traditionally understood, problematic. What, then,

[38]This way of thinking about immigration avoids the traps of essentialism. The conflict between native and different values allows for the creation of new identities. Historical minorities with unique culture, tradition and language present a different problem. Integrating, not assimilating, them presents different challenges.

[39]What, I think, is missing from current debates about immigration is the need for reciprocal respect between those who enter a country and those already living there; an openness on both sides to the values and to the lessons the other can offer to it would enrich the life of each. As a refugee to a welcoming society like Canada I can testify to the value of reciprocity. Still, my status as an immigrant in Canada and the status of historical minorities in Canada and in Central and Eastern European raises different questions. In the case of new immigrants, as opposed to historical minorities, the question is not whether any but how much cultural autonomy they should enjoy within sovereign nation states?

remains of Zakaria's attack on illiberalism? A proponent of illiberalism in Zakaria's sense would have no respect for laws, would allow for the infringement of individual rights and would favor executive decisions over democratic deliberation. Macpherson and Mouffe are more measured than Schmitt is in their criticism of liberalism. They both believe that liberalism is non-viable without wide popular consent. But, for both, liberalism's respect for laws and individual rights should not be separable from social justice and equality. The main aspect of liberalism that Mouffe wishes to retain is its pluralism, a pluralism of group subjects.

In his *On Populist Reason*, Ernesto Laclau discusses the rise of right-wing and left-wing populism in Eastern Europe after the First World War (Lilla, 2007). He does not mention the case of Hungary where left-wing and right-wing populism was intertwined in a complicated way. An understanding of the way right-wing and left-wing motives are combined in the politics of Victor Orban might serve as an illustration of the limitations of Zakaria's critique of illiberal democracy.

During a speech to his supporters in 2014, in the Romanian town of Tusnad, he proudly called for an "illiberal democracy". It is not clear whether he had in mind Zakaria's discussion of the concept. Orban's attack on liberalism focuses on the harmful effects of the runaway financial sector, on the danger of uncontrolled immigration, but he is not specifically opposed to the kind of liberties Zakaria associates with liberalism. His emphasis is, rather, on promoting economic nationalism. He poses the question of how a modern nation can be economically competitive. In hindsight, Orban's tenure of power can be seen as enacting many of the illiberal measures Zakaria had warned against, but he does not name them as the motivating principles of his actions. Consequently, examining Orban's claim that Hungary would be better off adopting an illiberal form of democracy might be a useful addition to my reflections about democracy in this essay.

To some extent, Orban's political program echoes Carl Schmitt's views on the nature of the political. Neither fits Zakaria's definition of illiberalism perfectly. While they put emphasis on electoral success neither of them proposes, explicitly, the complete abolition of individual rights. But they both insist that having rights presupposes being a member of a homogeneous community. They do not advocate for unlimited executive power, instead they prefer to turn the institutions of constitutional democracy in the service of partizan goals of the winning party. Orban as an active politician has mastered the art of promoting his own interests inside a legal system that he can manipulate. Both Schmitt and Orban consider liberal democracy to be in crisis because it attempts to reconcile two irreconcilable principles: abstract universalism and concrete popular sentiment. So, in the end, it is not clear how Zakaria's diagnosis applies to them. One obstacle to fitting Schmitt's and Orban's position into Zakaria's framework is that they attack not so much individual freedom and the rule of law, as the liberal ideology of possessive individualism and of abstract human rights. Orban, in particular, sees unfettered liberalism as the protection of the economically powerful rather than improving the economic well-being of the whole nation. Also, there is reason to believe that

Orban's support among the Hungarian electorate is partly due to the dissatisfaction with the neo-liberal policies imposed on Hungary following the regime change of 1989, which, in turn, was exacerbated by the global financial crisis of 2008. Lastly, Orban's restrictive immigration policies are attractive to the population, in light of the resentment they feel about the treaty of Trianon that followed First World War.[40] All in all, Orban sees democracy divorced from liberalism as a combination of what Zakaria means by it, majority electoral support and, the affirmation of national sovereignty.[41]

At this point, we should recall the distinction made earlier between procedural and substantive concepts of democracy: between its form and its content. Some democrats put the emphasis on form. They value in it the free expression of the will of the people through elections, whatever the outcome may be: preference for conservative, liberal or even dictatorial forms of government. This points to a fundamental problem with democracy: could democrats, advocates of popular sovereignty, undermine their own power? Both Schmitt and Orban endorse procedural democracy with a substantive conservative content. For them, the preconditions of substantive democracy is the homogeneity of the citizen body. In Orban's case, the content of democracy is a type of Christian Democracy. So, when he speaks about democracy he means both: majority of electoral support, and equality among like-minded individuals under a form of pro-Christian government.

In most cases the problem with democracy surfaces in the following manner: first, those who vote for delegates representing a certain political programme may find that neither the behavior of those delegates nor the way they put into practice the promised political programme live up to their expectations. In short, a contradiction might arise between the formal expression of political power, through elections, and the substantive result of those elections. Complaint that a political leadership is undemocratic means one of two things. Either it means that the leadership is not "liberal", in the widest sense of that word, or it means that when in power the actions of the leadership betray the promises made during the campaign for election. In this way, the difference between right-wing and left-wing oppositions to a democratically elected government can be explained. Left-wing oppo-

[40]Left-wing opponents of the treaty, such as myself, regret the unfair treatment the Hungarian population of the Dual Monarchy has received. The drastic reduction of its territory and the massive dislocation of its citizens, might be seen, at best, as a vengeful response to the political injustices suffered by historical minorities of the Dual Monarchy. For us, left nationalists, return to the pre- WWI status quo is not the answer. Our hope is for a just European Union that protects the rights of all historical minorities, and welcomes refugees with adequate provisions for them. Ironically, as a result of the removal of a large number of its population in 1918 Hungary has become the most ethnically pure culturally and linguistically homogeneous nation in Central Europe. So, it is understandable that Orban's supporters do not wish to jeopardize the linguistic and cultural integrity of what is left of their nation. But, regrettably, the passion of patriotism trumps, in their view, the needs of asylum seekers.

[41]My attempt to clarify Orban's support for illiberal democracy should not be seen as endorsement of his political actions in recent years. In defending his version of democracy he has harmed the educational institutions of his country. He used his super majority in parliament to enact oppressive measures against the legal establishment, and in his political speeches he reviled those who objected to his policies. In short, he is a valiant representative of right-wing populism.

nents complain that in spite of their electoral victory liberal democratic governments do not express the true interest of their constituents. This criticism has been made against the Clinton and Blair administrations. Right-wing opponents, on the other hand, complain that a liberal democratic government, even duly elected, ignores fundamental values of their nation. Given that in current usage "democracy" means "liberal democracy", it is useful to ask what liberalism and democracy mean independently of one another. Zakaria has indicated that by "democracy" he means free and fair elections and by "liberalism" he means the rule of law, respect of individual freedom and the separation of powers. He leaves no doubt that the two forms of government are compatible without implying one another. Carl Schmitt would disagree. For him mass democracy, that is, representative liberal democracy, rests on a "confused combination of both". (Schmitt, 1988: p. 13) His reason, as I have shown, is based on the view that liberalism is committed to the "equality of mankind" (Schmitt, 1988: p. 11) and democracy presupposes the substantial equality of citizens within "nationally homogeneous states" (Schmitt, 1988: p. 11). This implies that for Schmitt, as for Plato and Aristotle, not all inhabitants of a state have equal rights under the law, or should have equal access to political power. Most of today's liberals would consider such restriction on citizenship undemocratic. But, if one were to abandon Schmitt's rigid notions of equality and of homogeneity, replacing it with a weaker form of shared identity, one could make liberalism and democracy compatible with one another.

7. Conclusion

In this essay, using examples of ancient, modern and contemporary philosophers, I have tried to show that democracy is a problematic concept, both in its pure form and even as it is combined with the concept of liberalism. Throughout history, philosophers, basically elitists, have tried to find accommodations with the democratic idea with different degrees of success. Plato and Aristotle, no friends of pure democracy, saw that it was viable if combined with some form of authoritarian constitutionalism. Spinoza, a great advocate of freedom of thought, believed that while non-democratic regimes, at their best, contained democratic elements, the most natural and the most rational form of government was a democracy. Hegel, following Montesquieu, believed that a democratic form of government was most appropriate in regimes where a substantive ethical life was the norm. He did not believe that it was appropriate for modern societies whose ethical life was dominated by the realm of needs and by the pursuit of individual liberty.

Debates among our contemporaries concern the nature and viability of liberal democracy. Their question is to what extent liberalism is compatible with democracy and how the two can be combined. How, in other words, is it possible to create a society where social justice and equality can be reconciled with the freedom for all citizens who may have different value orientations. Carl Schmitt thinks that the goals of liberalism and democracy are incompatible. C B MacPherson be-

lieves that greater participation in social production would make for a just and equal society. Chantale Mouffe advocates a pluralist democracy characterized by the struggle for power by different groups representing conflicting values and desires (affects). Her proposal for a "Green Democratic Revolution" suggests that affects, both negative and positive, could be harnessed by an inclusive left populist program for social justice. But, one might ask whether in a climate of runaway consumerism and a passionate attachment to individual liberties on the part of the majority of citizens, enough popular support can be obtained for reversing the environmental crisis threatening the planet. It seems that in order to achieve such reversal a major realignment of political affects would first have to be required.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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