

Paradox of Democracy: A Critical Assessment

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ARTICLE DETAILS	ABSTRACT
Article History Published Online: 5 December 2020	<i>Philosophers and thinkers have made a decent attempt to detail some standardizing framework to advance at any rate human prosperity. It was in this capacity of scholars and mastermind that advanced the idea of 'Democracy' as arrangement of administration in antiquated Greece, seeing the introduction of Athens as a City State at some point in the year 508-507 BCE. Athens, the City State, seen a change from despotic to majority rule. The dynamic included the residents straightforwardly, who were permitted to talk and cast a ballot in the gathering outlining laws of the City-State. To keep up fair-mindedness the administrative and legal authorities were chosen arbitrarily. Athens even till today is viewed as the ideal of majority rule government, a type of direct where each resident had equivalent option to partake in dynamic of the City State. Vote based system as a type of government has developed hypothetically from direct to circuitous or delegate structure and again structure the investment of the favored Greek residents to participatory structure where all residents are important for the favored Greek cycle. Be that as it may, in this paper I propose to display the various models have left a sample of discriminatory circulation of force in opposition to the fundamental nature of democracy of populism, bringing about divided cooperation in the force structure.</i>
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Democracy as a political system that has not had a continuous history; in fact democracy is a more recently adopted forms of governance and as such a new fact in today's world politics. The term 'people' too has had different implications and significances, for example, in Greek times it was direct or non-representative government but nowadays we understand it to mean liberal representative government. Human history having passed through and shunned monarchy and aristocratic system of governance has today given democracy a high moral ground as a political community adhering to the promised practice of equality of individuals. However, according to Held, the notion of democracy is immensely being one-voiced and there is a great deal of uncertainty about the meaning of both the rule and the people. (Held, 2006, p. 1) In today's democracy, political representatives are chosen through elections to form government, who are responsible and accountable to the people for the policies of the government. The collective decisions and actions of the representatives are therefore considered democratic. In these democratic forms of governments there are a large number of variations with different stresses on the modes of governance, and contribution of people in ruling themselves, openness and accountability of the government to the people.

Some political thinkers, such as Schumpeter, argue that the concept of democracy should be recognized with the procedures and institutions characteristic of modern Western democracies. The result is that democracy has been thought of as a set of standards for evaluating the process of decision-making. Therefore, according to Rousseau, the rules of decision-making should be structured, so as to produce decisions that are possible to be in harmony with the will of the people, where equality and agreement are the essential ideals behind the progression of decision-making. It means that the

second type of conception of democracy is theoretical in nature, while the first type is the practical side of democracy. Therefore, according to the Encyclopaedia of Democracy, it is

...a system of government in which all adult persons within the unit of rule are entitled to participate equally in making general laws and policy. Each of the elements within this and most other definitions will require further specification. In the course of such elaboration most theories go beyond description and definition to some statement of democratic ideals. (Lipset, 1995, p. 1278)

Thus if we look at the history of democracy we find it started in Athens just before the beginning of the fifth century BC. The main purpose of coming of the Athenian democracy was the demand for equality and freedom for the citizens, although these citizens were only persons who satisfied some criteria, including of possession of property, the ordinary people and slaves were not so counted. However, the Greek people from the time of Solon, the great rebel and political thinker, started to shift towards some notion of democracy developing its laws, leading to what is today known as the Athenian democracy. It was in 510 BC that Athens matured its institutions of democracy, which was initially ushered in to unite the people with criterion devoid of any connotation to wealth. This instituted the notions of freedom and equality for the citizens of Athens. There are some who argue that initially the intention was to unite and only later came the notion of equality and freedom. For the purpose of this thesis this much should suffice any further deliberation would only be a digression from its main theme. The Athenian democracy met its end after the defeat by Sparta, which gave rise to a

...strange silence in the history of democratic thought that ends with the early renaissance. This period overlaps significantly with the medieval period which

marks the period between the collapse of the Roman Empire in the fifth century and the beginning of the Renaissance in the fourteenth century. (Rein and Brodie, 2009, p. 50)

The feudal age witnessed the regarding of monarchs as the vicegerents of God with authority on earth derived directly from Him. The

...Christian world-view transformed the rationale political action from that of the *polis* to a theological framework. The Hellenic view of man as formed to live in a city was replaced by a preoccupation with how humans could live in communication with God. In sharp contrast to the Greek view that the *polis* was the embodiment of political good, the Christian worldview insisted that the good lay in submission to God's will. How the will of God was to be interpreted, and articulated with systems of secular power, preoccupied Christian Europe for centuries, until the very notion of a single religious truth was shattered by the Reformation. (Held, 2006, p. 29)

The ancient democracy failed not because of the innate weaknesses of direct democracy but due to the fact that it too exhibited partiality towards a part of its population. According to Aristotle,

...the 'constitutional government' or 'polity'...is a mixture of true democracy and oligarchy; but in common usage the term 'constitutional government' is reserved for mixtures which incline more towards oligarchy are called aristocracies. This leads us into a digression on the uses of the term 'aristocracy' and the reasons why that term - through being associated in men's mind partly with the rule of gentfolk, and partly with the rule of law - is somewhat vaguely and widely applied. The proper use of terms depends on recognition of the fact that there are three elements to be considered in a city, the free-born poor, the wealthy, and the men of merit, and not only the two elements of the poor and the wealthy. On this basis we shall confine the term 'aristocracy' to constitution which recognize merit in some way or other; and we shall use the term 'constitutional government', and not only that term, for constitutions which recognize only the two elements of free birth and wealth. (Cf., Barker, 1958, p. 174)

Therefore, Aristotle too takes into account the linking of governance with economic hierarchy that is aristocracy, as the best instrument of government. Aristotle's contribution to the tradition of democratic thought is his addition of the criteria of lasting or stable and effective government. It must be created through unbiased law and is what Aristotle calls a moderate democracy in which the law is sovereign. Thus, Aristotle advocates that,

...in all states there are three elements: one class is very rich, another is very poor, and a third in a mean. It is admitted that moderation and the mean are best, and therefore it will clearly be best to possess the gifts of fortune in moderation; for in that condition of life men are most ready to follow rational principle. But he who greatly excels in beauty, strength, birth, or wealth, or on the other hand who is very poor, or very

weak, or very much disgraced, finds it difficult to follow rational principle. (Cf., Benjamin, p. 190)

The inner corruption of the city-states and civil war, besides the war among states, resulted in the fall of the democratic city-state of Athens. However, even after the collapse of the democratic city-state in Athens the Aristotelian notions continued to capture the imagination of builders of political systems. It was this continuation that prompted democracy to appear in the form of the Roman Republic. At some stage Rome followed the principle of limited representative government that was governed by aristocratic class. Later the idea of the Republic came under the influence of Christian theological principle that 'all men are born equal'. Romans developed the idea that all citizens are equal before the law. The point in question here is that the equal citizens before the law were.

Some societies moved towards liberal democratic governments with greater political equality and opposed those encouraging the development of dictatorial systems. This progress in implementation of the democratic norms led Montesquieu and Rousseau to elaborate the idea of a government composed of equally powerful and independent executive, legislature, and judiciary. At the same time in America, the government adopted this separation of power in the state. But in many other countries the franchising rights were restricted to property owners. However, in the nineteenth century, a large number of states and cities tried to give the voters control over their government through elections by means of the Swiss political procedures of proposal, and referendum. Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau attempted to answer the question concerning the origin of state and civil society. The social contract theory was a powerful alternative theory to the notion of heavenly rights of the king. According to this theory, people in a society made a contract with each other or with a ruler to guarantee them to certain needs such as equality, justice, safety and peace. However, there are differences between the three, according to Hobbes man is selfish by nature and in the state of nature, and in the life of man there is

...is no place for Industry; because the fruit thereof is uncertain; and consequently no culture of the Earth; no navigation, no use of the commodities that may be imported by Sea; no commodities Buildings; no Instruments of moving, and removing such things as require much force; no knowledge of the face of the Earth; no account of time; no Arts; no Letters, no Society; and which is worst of all, continual fear, and danger of violent death; And the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short. (Hobbes, 1974, p. 143)

Hobbes argued that in state of nature all men are against all men, that is, everyone is an enemy to everyone else. He accepts that man searches for pleasure and to reach this pleasure man needs power over others. Therefore, people stay in natural terror of each other. From this state of fear people come to associate with one another and establish the state. People contract with each other to set up the ruler. They surrender their natural rights to the sovereign, who is a result of this contract but the result is not a part of the contract. Hobbes is remembered as the originator of modern liberalism primarily because of his emphasis on the individual's moral autonomy and independence of intellect; otherwise he is a supporter of an

absolutist form of government. According to him, an absolutist government provides stability and ensures peace among the people. In aristocracy or democracy, government by a few or by many, respectively, conflicts are bound to occur among the members of the ruling fraternity over opportunity and celebrity.

Locke, on the other hand, sees the state of nature as an idyllic state where there is total liberty. The reason for government is more for interpretation of law when such a conflict arises among the people. His contract has two separate stages, the first where men form a government through a contract. The second stage comes when a government is not carrying out the will of the majority and can be recalled, thereby ushering in democracy as we know it today with the notion of election changing the government if it feels the need. For Locke, the form of government depends upon positioning the highest power in the hands of legislative that make the laws, such as the commonwealth, therefore according to him commonwealth means

...not a democracy, or any form of government, but any independent community which the *Latines* signified by the word *civitas*, to which the word which best answers in our language, is common-wealth, and most properly expresses such a society of men, which community or city in English does not; for there may be subordinate communities in a government; and city amongst us has a quite different notion from common-wealth: and therefore, to avoid ambiguity, I crave leave to use the word common-wealth in that sense, in which I find it used by King James the first; and I take it to be its genuine signification; which if anybody dislike, I consent with him to change it for a better. (Locke, 1988, p. 355)

Rousseau, the third contract theorist, delineated the government relating it as an

...intermediate body set up between the subjects and the sovereign and it is charged with the execution of the law and the maintenance of liberty, both civil and political. In government reside the intermediate forces whose relations make up that of the whole to the whole or of the sovereign to the states. This last relation may be represented as that between the extreme terms of a continuous proportion, which has government as its mean proportional. The government gets from Sovereign the orders it gives the people, and for the State to be properly balanced, there must when everything is reckoned in, be equality between the product or power of the government taken in itself, and the product or power of the citizens, who are on the one hand sovereign and on the other subject. (Rousseau, 1946, p. 222)

So, he called government the legitimate use of the decision-making power and magistrate the body charged with that government. Therefore, Rousseau says,

If the number of supreme magistrates in different states should be in inverse proportion to that of citizens, it follows that, in general democratic government is best suited to small states, aristocracy for those moderate size, and monarchy for large ones. This rule is derived directly from the principle, but how can we count the multitude of circumstances the can furnish expectations. (Rousseau, 1946, p. 231)

In course of time, democracy was put into practice and started to show fault lines as a system. Tocqueville decried it as tyranny of the majority. Mill followed Tocqueville's line of argument in his essay '*On Liberty*'. Mill's arguments, however, were not in terms of collectivities, such as minorities but individuals whose liberty and rights were to take priority and projected. This was important since democracy is a promise of equal liberty to all. Since, proportionate representation is not followed therefore, equal participation of 'the people' is violated and lopsided distribution of power is the result, since then different definitions of democracy have been forwarded but all have failed in their endeavour. One of the major challenges that liberal democracy centrality of the problem is the protection of minority rights. Mill and his successors argued against what they feared to be the rule of the majority that they termed 'tyranny of the majority' or 'majoritarianism'. Whilst there are disagreements among democratic political thinkers about how rigid the problem of tyranny of the majority is the problem of adjustment of minority remains that has taken different forms including 'pluralism'. The commitment to pluralism is based on the notion of individual rights and its requirement of state neutrality, especially with respect to the visions of a good life.

Therefore, liberal democratic politics is perceived as the leading system in contemporary politics. To correct past faults in our political development, it is important that political philosophers should continue to examine the effects of liberalism on today's democracy. The utilitarian philosophy of Bentham and Mill has come to shape how our present political institutions and systems ought to be organized and functioned. That is, with utilitarianism modern democracy has come to be surrounded by a number of ideologies of maximizing the general happiness for the greatest number of people. With this entrenched ideology in modern democracy, politics in contemporary Western society has come to take root in a majoritarian and representative system of governance, wherein governments are seen as the representative and the perpetrator of the will and desires of the majority.

Mill in his book, titled '*On Liberty, Representative Government, and the Subjection of Women*', writes,

...that the ideally best form of government is that in which the sovereignty, or supreme controlling power, in the last resort, is vested in the entire aggregate of the community; every citizen not only having a voice in the exercise of that ultimate sovereignty, but being, at least occasionally, called on to take an actual part in the government, by the personal discharge of some public function, local or general. (Mill, 1954, p. 186)

Therefore, to conclude I would like to say that, democracy constitutes the system in which people become conscious of their rights and dignity. The main purpose of democracy or the aim of a democratic government is to manage justice among the people, as well as to guarantee the basic rights of people such as freedom and equality. In Mill's socio-political thought, utilitarian structure of values of democracy becomes meaningful only in the light of his deliberations on the concepts of justice and equality. Mill says that for any society to be held truly democratic, then there must be hold these two goals of democracy because their realization enhances both social and political freedom. Mill says that any state that does not hold more liberty to its individuals, then it is said to be more just like that which does not, and any

democratic form of government which helps us in achieving these ideals of justice and equality, then these type of democracy is said to be practicing ideal democracy.

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