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FROM SCHUMPETER TO THE IDEAL OF PARTICIPATION: A FEW QUESTIONS FOR RADICAL DEMOCRATS

ABSTRACT Od prawie trzech dekad trwa debata pomiędzy zwolennikami minimalistycznej koncepcji demokracji przedstawicielskiej, a tymi, którzy, polemizując z nimi, proponują normatywne i bardziej substancjalne ujęcie demokracji, uznające aktywne uczestnictwo obywateli w życiu publicznym i podejmowaniu demokratycznych decyzji za wartość. Najbardziej aktywni wśród tych ostatnich są teoretycy opowiadający się za deliberatywnym modelem demokracji i odwołujący się do koncepcji rozumu publicznego. Artykuł przedstawia krytyczną analizę głównych argumentów wysuwanych przez radykalnych demokratów odchodzących od proceduralnego modelu demokracji na rzecz aktywnego uczestnictwa i procesu deliberatywnego. Moim celem jest zwrócenie uwagi na kilka istotnych problemów, z jakimi zwolennicy demokracji uczestniczącej i deliberatywnej nie potrafili się jak dotąd uporać. Problemy te zdają się wynikać z samej natury nożycyjnej demokracji.

INTRODUCTION

Normative democratic theories like all normative theories assume that people are able to and may want to act in a different way than they usually do. In liberal democracies people at large usually do not actively participate in the public/political life and at best they vote in regular periodic elections at both the state and the local level, occasionally express their view in a referendum if asked by the government to do so, or form interest groups to lobby their representatives. Radical democratic theorists who advocate participation, however, take it for granted that if institutions, mechanisms, and venues that facilitate and encourage citizens' participation were available (to eve-

ryone), and if the state was more responsive to various fora where participation takes place, it would become a desirable and rewarding practice for many citizens.

It is not my aim here to look at or even summarise arguments of all various accounts of a more robust democracy; what I intend to do instead is to examine some fundamental claims of radical democrats¹ as a departure from procedural, descriptive, elitist democratic theory of a Schumpeterian type. To evaluate these claims I will look at some vital questions that more participatory, deliberative, or associative ideals of democracy should address. Finally, I will juxtapose these ideals with the modern, especially liberal critique of democracy. Both Schumpeter's and to some extent Dahl's theories of democracy can be seen as expressing arguments that address this critique.

The efforts to elucidate the normative foundations of democracy and to give democratic will-formation a greater role than it is usually presupposed by political liberalism have recently been undertaken by radical democratic theorists. New developments in democratic theory have expressed criticism of liberal politics, in that it has disregarded any sense of community and the public good, and has opened doors to free riders, has led to the dominance of private and group interests, and undermined the role of the public sphere. Such politics is at odds with classical republican politics that seeks freedom of the community through citizens' public virtue and civic consciousness, their concern with the common good, and active citizenship. The main thesis of radical democrats, who have renewed interest in republican ideals, seems to concern the extent, value and the role of citizens' active participation undermined by such twentieth century democratic theorists as Joseph Schumpeter, Robert Dahl, Gabriel Almond Giovanni Sartori, or William Riker², and by political liberalism in general. Their quest is a more robust democracy within the established liberal democracies based on political equality which allows every individual to benefit from collective self-rule. The debate is often described in terms of two different visions of the public sphere, which are present in republicanism and liberalism.³ The republican public sphere is the centre of democratic will-formation and the medium of self-government, whereas the liberal public sphere is situated outside the political sphere and only helps to rationally resolve political problems. On the liberal and pluralistic side, participation by most people must be limited to the act of voting.⁴ Democratic republicanism is thus juxtaposed with liberal proceduralism.

Consequently, there are two dominant and competing theories of democracy today: the theory of liberal democracy (often described as procedural or "aggregative"

¹ By 'radical democracy' I mean here a broadly conceived normative democratic theory that includes participatory, deliberative, associative and republican conceptions of democracy.

² Joseph Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, Alen and Unwin, London 1976; Robert A. Dahl, *A Preface to Democratic Theory*, Chicago University Press, Chicago, 1956; Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba, *The Civic Culture*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1963.

³ See for example Axel Honneth, 'Democracy as Reflective Cooperation: John Dewey and the Theory of Democracy Today', *Political Theory*, Vol. 26, No. 6, 1998, pp. 763-774.

⁴ Robert Dahl and Edward R. Tufte, *Size and Democracy*, Stanford University Press, Stanford 1973.

democracy) advocated by Schumpeter, Dahl, Sartori, Riker, and others, and the participatory, deliberative, and republican models, sometimes described as “classical” models. The liberal-democratic models (elitism, pluralism) are descriptive-explanatory accounts of democratic politics and have a realistic and objective goal. What is crucial to their approach to democracy is the role of various constitutional arrangements and rules in assuring fair competition among political leaders, the protection of citizens’ rights, and the continuity of the regime. It is clear, however, that the procedural model of democracy cannot be purely descriptive; by designating a certain set of institutions and mechanisms as “democracy” and therefore as opposed to “despotism” it has also an evaluative character and appeals to evaluative intuitions that are associated with the term democracy.⁵ Participatory, deliberative, associative, and republican models of democracy are normative models within democratic theory; they are prescriptive and not purely descriptive visions of democracy which assess democratic outcomes with reference to some substantive goods and values. I will come back to this point later.

SCHUMPETER AND PLURALISTS

A vision of democracy as a competition of political leaders for voters’ support and as a method of choosing and changing governments dominated democratic theory, and to some extent democratic practice after the second world war. Published in 1942, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy* became a seminal work in democratic theory although only its last two chapters bring a descriptive and realist account of liberal democracy. The point of departure of Schumpeter’s account is a critique of normative democratic thinking which presupposes that a democratic order is to achieve the common good that all people could agree on, and that its main mechanism is the popular will of the people whose role as citizens is to express their will. The public good cannot be found either in decisions of the electorate during the vote nor in those made by representatives who always represent particular interests. Similarly, there cannot be a “common will” that would guide the democratic process, but only a sum of preferences.⁶ For Schumpeter, interested in the actual functioning of democracy, democratic system is then nothing else then a method, “an institutional arrangement of arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of competitive struggle for the people’s vote.”⁷ Competitive elitism as a realist and empirical view of democracy was a departure from such modern views of democracy as those of John Stuart Mill and Alexis de Tocqueville. It rejected participation as a value, even as an instrumental value. If what matters in democracy

⁵ Adam Przeworski, ‘Minimalist Conception of Democracy: A Defense’ in I. Shapiro and C. Hacker-Cordon (eds), *Democracy’s Value*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1999, p. 23.

⁶ Joseph Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, p. 26.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 269.

is a clear division of labour between representatives and voters, and if only the former set the terms of public policy, citizens' role has to be confined to voting in periodical elections, they cannot exercise a direct influence on their political leaders.⁸ The role of politicians in a competitive elitist democracy is analogous to that of entrepreneurs while the role of citizens is analogous to that of consumers. Schumpeter seems to suggest that the reality confirms his beliefs that people will never be willing to become truly active and involved citizens not only because it is a very demanding and time-consuming activity, but also because there is not such a need. Representation that limits participation is better than "the thing itself" for it allows various issues to be represented in different ways depending on the context. This broader context cannot be always seen by ordinary citizens, even if they perform the role of deliberators. The central advantage of procedural competitive democracy comes not from widespread participation, but from the right of the citizens dissatisfied with democratic politics and the performance of their political leaders to "turn the rascals out". So there is nothing wrong with democracy identified with the existence of competitive elections.

Both Schumpeter's competitive elitism and later Robert Dahl's pluralism⁹ belong or claim to belong to "empirical democratic theory" and thus to so-called empirical and value-neutral political science. But their "realist" democratic theory has often been charged that it is conservative and ideological rather than purely descriptive.¹⁰ Recently descriptive, procedural accounts of democracy have been accused of removing the vital force of a community of participating members – the old democratic vision that emphasised popular political activity and the rationale for such activity. This, according to critics, meant an ideological redefinition of the term *democracy* itself. We can ask, however, whether the notion of democracy as it was used in modern times by Jeremy Bentham, Tocqueville or J. S. Mill was understood predominantly in terms of popular participation. It was J. S. Mill who emphasised that modern democracy can only work as a representative democracy and although he emphasized the educational role of participation, he was nonetheless aware of its limits as an actual mechanism of democratic decision-making.¹¹ Empirical theorists such as Dahl do not deny that democracy is about "the rule by the people", but they see this rule as limited to a free and competitive political system which does not require exten-

⁸ Ibid., p. 295.

⁹ See Robert A. Dahl, *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1971, chaps. 1-2; *Democracy and Its Critics*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1989, part 5.

¹⁰ See Graeme Duncan, Steven Lukes, 'The New Democracy', *Political Studies*, Vol. 11, 1963; Alasdair MacIntyre, *Against Self-Image of the Age: Essays on Ideology and Philosophy*, Schocken, New York, 1971, p. 9; Charles Taylor, 'Neutrality in Political Science', in P. Lasslet and W.G. Runciman (eds.), *Philosophy, Politics and Society*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1967, pp. 32-36. Quentin Skinner, 'The Empirical Theorists of Democracy and Their Critics: A Plague on Both Their Houses', *Political Theory*, Vol. 1, No. 3, 1973, pp. 292-294.

¹¹ See John Stuart Mill, *Representative Government*, in *On Liberty and Other Essays*, ed. and introduction by J. Gray, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1998.

sive political participation and in which the ruling class plays predominant role. In Schumpeter's view, in democracies there is a necessary division of labour between political leaders who rule and the citizens who cannot have a permanent influence on political decisions. What is at stake here is the question of the legitimacy of democratic decisions; are they legitimate due to the fact that representatives who make them have been elected in free and fair elections, or do they need for their legitimacy some more pronounced acceptance of what the citizens' expressed during the democratic process? Before we put forward some possible answers to this question we need to examine the main postulates formulated by the critics of procedural democracy and their assertion that a Schumpeterian-type liberal democracy cannot be defended as truly democratic.¹²

NORMATIVE DEMOCRATIC THEORY AND THE IDEAL OF PARTICIPATION

So far I have considered some main arguments of democratic theorists who in their analysis of the actual functioning of representative democracy do not find popular participation as desirable as such and who are sceptical about the role of participation. Arguably, the view of democratic participation as central to the functioning of democracy can be seen as one of the main aspects of the normative democratic theory which distinguishes it from the theory of liberal democracy summarised above. Various models of deliberative, participatory, republican and associative democracy do not constitute separate democratic theories for they all concern themselves with democratic politics which is, at least partly, shaped by citizens who exercise their political rights, and they endorse a richer understanding of legitimacy and the decision-making process than the liberal democratic theory.¹³ Similarly, they all represent an attempt to overcome the deficiencies of the liberal democratic theory, its formal and procedural character, as well as the view of the individual as a maximizer of his or her own expected preference-satisfaction. They reject the concept of democratic politics understood solely in terms of fair bargaining among groups who pursue their own particular interests. There are of course important differences between these approaches, and there are significant differences within them.¹⁴ The concept of deliberative democracy focuses on the procedure of ideal deliberation that aims at a rationally motivated consensus.¹⁵ The participatory model brings to the fore the value and im-

¹² Aware of such criticism, Robert Dahl reserves the term "democracy" as referring to an ideal and uses instead a neologism "poliarchy" to describe the real world phenomenon.

¹³ Cf. Frank Cunningham, *Theories of Democracy: A Critical Introduction*, Routledge, London and New York, 2002.

¹⁴ For an overview see Ian Shapiro, *The State of Democratic Theory*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2003.

¹⁵ Joshua Cohen, 'Deliberation and Democratic Legitimacy', in D. Estlund (ed.), *Democracy*, Oxford, Blackwell 2002, p. 93.

portance of citizens' participation in the decision-making process at both local and national level. Associative democracy is a conception based on a normative claim that effective governance of social affairs as well as individual freedom and welfare can be best promoted and served when "as many of the affairs of society as possible are managed by voluntary and democratically self-governing associations".¹⁶ Voluntary, self-governing associations are supposed here to constitute the main mechanism of democratic governance of political and economic affairs.¹⁷ The model, influenced by the revival of republicanism, stresses the role of such republican ideals as civic virtue and responsible citizenship in making democracy a more desirable and more substantive ideal. Since these four approaches seem to have more in common than it is usually assumed, I prefer to call them "models" within normative democratic theory and not "theories".

New or renewed developments in democratic theory are a departure from democratic elitism and the purely procedural account of democracy. I would like to juxtapose these two approaches to democracy, normative and procedural, in order to elucidate the arguments of radical democrats and the questions they need to address if their claims are to be viable.

I should like to begin with the thesis that the debate between procedural liberal democrats and their critics whose assertions concern the questions of democratic legitimacy, accountability, and participation can be summarised – not without some simplifications – in the following question: how do we evaluate democratic decisions and democratic outcomes? Are they just due to the procedure, the method by which the decisions are made, and if the procedure is fair the decisions are also fair, or do we assess democratic decision-making as just from the point of view of the quality of outcomes?¹⁸ The second possibility concerns some substantive goods such as efficiency of outcomes, the public good, liberty, autonomy of the individual etc. It is also possible to evaluate democratic outcomes from both substantive and procedural points of view at the same time. The main task of normative democratic theory and its new developments is to evaluate political systems, to prescribe certain ways of institutional, social arrangements as well as ways of making democracy a more substantive ideal, and not just to describe the actual democratic practice. It is widely argued that along with the support for democracy citizens level more expectations at their governments; they expect more responsiveness, better performance, more accountability, and less incom-

¹⁶ Paul Hirst, *Associative Democracy*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1996, p. 19.

¹⁷ In order to make associative democracy work there has to be a distribution of power to various domains of authority both territorial and functional. The main idea is to reduce the role of representative institutions and thus to reduce the scope of decisions made and affairs administered by state agencies. Much smaller role played by the central government would be supplemented by associationalism aims at 'publicizing' the private sphere in order not to trespass individuals' liberty, but to enhance them through wider control that citizens would have over their own lives.

¹⁸ See discussion in Thomas Christiano, 'The Authority of Democracy', *The Journal of Political Philosophy*, Vol. 12, No. 3, 2004, pp. 266-290, and Christopher G. Griffin, 'Democracy as a Non-Instrumental Just Procedure', *The Journal of Political Philosophy*, Vol. 11, No. 1, 2003, pp. 111-121.

petence and corruption. (Often citizens might be apathetic about politics if they perceive 'politics as the equivalent to the state'). Some trends have been observed that signify "the growth of more critical citizens dissatisfied with established authorities and traditional hierarchical institutions, who feel that existing channels for participation fall short of the democratic ideal, and who want to improve and reform the institutional mechanisms of representative democracy".¹⁹ On this reading, society should be a source of collective political judgement expressed by individuals acting collectively, and not simply by interest groups. It is argued further that during the twentieth-century democracy has come to mean procedures that enable an agreement between various groups and interests and that it consequently cuts-off the link between individuals and self-government. What follows is the assurance that somehow unspecified democratic self-government is a desirable democratic practice that cannot be denied to citizens in a truly democratic political order. This claim is linked to the argument about democratic legitimacy and especially the legitimacy of democratic decisions.

The problem of legitimacy is particularly salient among those democratic theorists who advocate democratic deliberation as a worthwhile mechanism of generating a rationally motivated consensus.²⁰ Such rationality facilitates cooperation among participants and enhances the problem-solving and reason-giving competence of individuals. Public deliberation then is "the way in which the practical reasoning of agents enters into political decision making".²¹ It is a test for democratic legitimacy that depends on the ability of those who are subject to a decision to participate in "authentic deliberation."²² This kind of participation takes place not only within the state where it involves the institutions of the liberal state, but also, and more importantly, in the public sphere and civil society and thus contributes to democratic stability. As Phillip Green has noticed,

What is nondemocratic about all forms of pseudorepresentative government – whether unitary or federalist, whether based on centralized or fragmented political parties... is that it turns political access and influence into an episodic and occasional or even nonexistent event in the lives of most people.²³

The model of deliberative democracy brings the problem of democratic legitimacy to the fore, and it is the question of legitimacy, not participation, that seems

¹⁹ Pippa Norris, 'Introduction', in P. Norris (ed.), *Critical Citizens: Global Support for Democratic Governance*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1999, p. 27.

²⁰ The concept of deliberative democracy found its most powerful proponent in Jürgen Habermas whose theory of communicative action and discourse ethics paved the way for the idea of deliberation as both a way of dealing with conflict and difference on the basis of mutual recognition, reciprocity, and a commitment to communicative rationality that lead to rational consensus. See Jürgen Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy*, tr. W. Rehg, MIT Press, Cambridge MA, 1996, pp. 287-328.

²¹ James Bohman, *Public Deliberation: Pluralism, Complexity, and Democracy*, MIT Press, Cambridge MA., 2002, p. 2.

²² John Dryzek, *Deliberative Democracy and Beyond*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2000, p. 85.

²³ Phillip Green, *Retrieving Democracy: In Search of Civic Equality*, Methuen, London, 1985, p. 179.

to provoke the arguments of its proponents.²⁴ They argue that deliberative democracy is a better model than “aggregative” or elitist democracy because it values public deliberation as a method of attaining legitimacy and holding political power to account. In deliberative democracy, legitimacy derives from citizens’ participation, their practice of citizenship. Democratic legitimacy and trust in authority is generated through discursive practices which are themselves a necessary source of justification for political decisions.²⁵ Legitimacy is also important with regard to principles of a given polity. The institutions’ trustworthiness generates positive attitudes towards them among citizens who are therefore more likely to comply with them.²⁶ Consequently, deliberation requires something more than just participation through expressing one’s opinion; it presupposes an agreement on the basic fundamental norms of a liberal-democratic state and aims at transformation of opinions and views so that consensus can be achieved. Charles Taylor asserts that such participation entails a strong bond of identification with the political community and the fellow-citizens.²⁷ The “procedural republic”²⁸ cannot achieve such goal as long as it undermines the value of the community’s public good and focuses on the individual freedom of choice and the necessary mechanisms that protect it. The alternative is often put in this way: do we want a democracy that focuses on the protection of individual freedoms, or one that centres on participation and shared self-government also seen as practices that protect citizens’ freedom? According to Taylor, both aspects have been present within liberal representative democracy throughout the past two centuries and still remain present today, and “only the balance has shifted so strongly in the direction of individualism that the civic element risks being forgotten altogether”.²⁹

Radical democrats do not undermine representation, but they have no doubt that it needs to be on the continuum with participation. The representative is an intermediary who brings political decisions to the attention of the people and who is responsive to the mediating public realm. Deliberative, participatory, and asso-

²⁴ See Bernard Manin ‘On Legitimacy and Political Deliberation’, *Political Theory*, Vol. 15, No. 3, 1987, pp. 338-368; Joshua Cohen, ‘Deliberation and Democratic Legitimacy’, in D. Estlund (ed.) *Democracy*, p. 93, Blackwell, Oxford 2002; Seyla Benhabib, ‘Toward a Deliberative Model of Democratic Legitimacy’ in S. Benhabib (ed.), *Democracy and Difference*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1996.

²⁵ This view is based on a concept of a “strong public” as opposed to Habermas’ “weak public” understood as the vehicle of public opinion.

²⁶ See Natalia Letki, ‘Investigating the Roots of Civic Morality: Trust, Civic Community, and Institutional Performance’, *Nuffield College Working Paper in Politics*, 2003-WP13; Mark E. Warren (ed.), *Democracy and Trust*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1999.

²⁷ Charles Taylor, ‘The Dynamics of Democratic Exclusion’, *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 9, No. 4, 1998, pp. 143-144.

²⁸ This term is used by Michael Sandel to describe contemporary liberal democracies that concern themselves with just procedures as sufficient mechanisms to provide such basic goods in the society as the protection of individual rights and social justice.

²⁹ Taylor, ‘The Dynamics’, p. 145.

ciative democratic theorists call for more thriving public spheres where organized public deliberation could take place. Many accounts of democracy have focused on the relationship between the public sphere, deliberation, and legitimacy, but participatory democratic governance seeks more than this; it calls for and tries to incorporate direct citizen voice into the determination of the state's policies and thus to give voice to the least advantaged groups of the society. Civil societies are particularly important in this respect as they raise the social power that can check economic power and produce state responsiveness. Associations that perform democratic functions provide a number of opportunities for democratic participation, which is *democratic* due to the fact that *every individual potentially affected by a decision has an equal opportunity to affect the decision*.³⁰ Participatory democrats who are preoccupied with the erosion of democratic vitality in the "thin democracy" emphasize that democratic participation has an intrinsic value, and the central ideal of democratic politics they advocate is the active involvement of citizens and achieving political consensus through dialogue.³¹ Participatory governance is supposed to involve reforms that *rely upon the commitment and capacities of ordinary people to make sensible decisions through reasoned deliberation and empowered because they attempt to tie action to discussion*.³² It is a project which combines the values of participation, deliberation, and empowerment.³³ "Strong democrats", such as Benjamin Barber, emphasise that the liberal view of citizenship creates weak and private citizens whose role is confined to regular voting and making their preferences clear. Barber argues that a participatory democratic process strengthens the role of citizens and re-establishes their sovereignty over other roles.³⁴ Moreover, participation is valuable and indispensable in democracy for it fosters human development, enhances a sense of political efficacy, reduces a sense of estrangements from the power-centre, fosters a concern for and knowledge of collective problems, and thus contributes to the formation of active and responsible citizenry interested in public affairs.³⁵ Participation in various associations within civil society – it is assumed – has both a democratic and a social function.

³⁰ Mark Warren, 'What Can Democratic Participation Mean Today?', *Political Theory*, Vol. 30, No. 5, 2002, p. 693.

³¹ See especially Carole Pateman, *Participation and Democratic Theory*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1970; Benjamin Barber, *Strong Democracy: Participatory Politics for a New Age*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1984; C. B. Macpherson, *Democratic Theory: Essays in Retrieval*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1973; Carol C. Gould, *Rethinking Democracy: Freedom and Social Cooperation in Politics, Economy, and Society*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1988.

³² Archon Fung and Erik Olin Wright, 'Thinking about Empowered Participatory Governance', in A. Fung, E.O. Wright (eds.), *Deepening Democracy*, Verso, London, 2003, pp. 3-45.

³³ Fung, Wright, 'Thinking about Empowered...', p. 5. Fung and Wright's project extends the application of deliberation and locates it empirically, in specific organizations and practices. It also builds upon the thesis of civic, democratic engagement in civil society.

³⁴ Barber, *Strong Democracy*, p. 208.

³⁵ See Pateman, *Democracy and Participation*, chaps. 2, 6.

PROBLEMS AND QUESTIONS

Let us now consider a few questions that radical democrats need to face if they want to defend their assertions about the role and in some cases the intrinsic value of democratic participation. The critique that follows does not cover all the major problems that can be associated with normative democratic theory, but addresses only a few of them. It is not my aim to undermine any attempts to revitalize liberal democracy and make the practice of citizenship central to it, but rather to indicate that radical democratic theorists need to be a bit more cautious with their expectations towards democratic citizens. I will start with some problems associated with the concept of the public good as being a result of public deliberation.

Rousseau believed that the common good exists prior to the democratic process that uncovers it and therefore it cannot be an outcome of aggregated or even widely debated preferences. But contemporary deliberative democrats seem to suggest exactly that. They disagree with public choice theorists, whose economic theory of democracy assumes that the public interest is identical with the verdict of the democratic process which defines it, not because they disagree with the role of the democratic process, but because they perceive this process as doing much more than aggregating preferences. On the deliberative reading, deliberation on expressed opinions and preferences that usually differ significantly leads to a common denominator, to the consensus on what outcomes might be desirable to all participants. Yet the concepts of the (public) good do not precede but are a result of public deliberation; a good political order is something that can be worked out here and then designed here, according to the concept of the public good that has in given circumstances been agreed upon. The justification of democratic outcomes is based on consensus that at the same time does not undermine the fact of pluralism. The task of political philosophy is still prescriptive but much narrower, confined to a given cultural context and applied to a certain political order. The claim that in liberal-democratic societies we do not seek universal truths is in fact based on such universal truth about the original institutional and ethical foundation of the political order.

One of the strongest arguments made by radical democrats concerns the relationship between participation in democratic politics and personal freedom that has been overlooked by liberal pluralists. The claim that there is a close connection between personal freedom and self-government has republican roots and its main assumption is about what makes members of a political community free persons.³⁶ First, the community itself must be free; second, in order to be free its members must participate in the process of political self-rule. Through participation persons gain civic autonomy, and through political discussion they undergo self-transformation – they are willing to comply with others and change their views about their own preferences and inte-

³⁶ On the republican roots of this view see Quentin Skinner, *Liberty Before Liberalism*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1998.

rests. Civic autonomy and self-transformation do not need to be acquired through consensus on political issues which is hard to achieve in contemporary pluralistic societies, but through a shared commitment to certain decision-making procedures and thus through agreement on the rules of participation in deliberation.³⁷ This issue brings us back to the old problem of ancient versus modern liberty, and even if “ancient” liberty is expressed in modern terms of civic autonomy and rational consensus, it is still uncertain how these values can be achieved. It is uncertain why it is assumed that individuals will become more rational and more willing to compromise simply because they will participate in a debate on equal terms with others. But there is something more than that. As Mark Warren puts it, “autonomy is a kind of freedom. Internally, autonomy implies that one can adopt a reflexive attitude toward one’s own internal impulses, interpreting, transforming, censoring... With regard to the social world, autonomy implies that one can distance oneself from traditions, prevailing opinions, and pressures to conform by subjecting elements of one’s social context to criticism.”³⁸

Autonomy than reflects individual’s free standing in a society. Participation in democratic politics is to foster such a free standing and thus individualism as it gives each person the opportunity to express their will and thereby to influence the outcomes of the democratic process. If explicated in this way, autonomy achieved through democratic participation is at odds with the goals of such participation; that is, with a rational consensus on desirable democratic outcomes or at least the procedures of equal participation. There is no clear link between distancing oneself from traditions, prevailing views, norms etc. in order to formulate one’s pure opinion (whatever it might be) and arriving at a consensus with others during the debate on common issues. We can assume that this kind of distance is necessary to achieve some special bonds with others who have also distanced themselves from the influence of traditions and prevailing opinions of their society, but why such bonds would foster a new sense of community it is still unclear.

What most radical democrats with all the differences between them expect from democratic participation when they talk about more robust and more participatory, deliberative democracy can be summarised as follows:

- Social unity (consensus) in deliberation
- Protection of difference through deliberation
- Better legitimacy and accountability
- Self-transformation and civic autonomy
- Social trust
- Associationalism
- Better decisions due to the influence of the results of public deliberation

³⁷ See, for example, Joshua Cohen, ‘Deliberation and Democratic Legitimacy’; Cass Sunstein, ‘Beyond Republican Revival’, *Yale Law Journal*, Vol. 97, 1988, p. 1554.

³⁸ Mark Warren, ‘The Self in Discursive Democracy’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Habermas*, ed. by S. White, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1995.

- A more thriving public sphere and civil society
- Support for the public good
- Active and responsible citizenry
- Citizens' ability to arrive at a rationally motivated consensus

These are very high expectations indeed. Still there are more questions than answers: How much does the fulfilment of those expectations depend on institutional arrangements and how much on peoples' abilities, attitudes, and willingness to participate, and consequently on their support for democracy? How can we be certain that active participation always brings good results? Why should we believe that people are prepared to make decisions and have opinions on public issues? Those democratic theorists who write in the republican tradition and who articulate such republican ideals as active and responsible citizenship, the concern with the public good, respect for law, republican freedom and self-government which they find in that tradition, take for granted that our societies and our politics can be revitalized if we make republican values central in our public life. Such thesis in itself assumes that people may find the preoccupation with the public life natural and perhaps even rewarding, or at least that they will understand what their public duties are. Republican democrats as well as participatory, deliberative and associative democrats need to clearly address the question of how to revitalize the public sphere and foster civic involvement, how to make participation a desirable form of activity for ordinary citizens. The main democratic devices that these visions of democracy involve and make central to any attempt aiming at a more robust democracy include political education, social solidarity, popular control and public accountability, effective governance, civic engagement, cooperative attitudes, political critique and reasonableness, but they somehow fail to describe how these goals can be achieved in the practical context. Even if there is no doubt that popular access to institutional venues that enable participation can be facilitated, it is still not certain that such venues will work and will bring desirable outcomes, democratic outcomes as it were.

Another question that has to be posed concerns the problem of unequal ability to participate that results from social inequalities (wealth, education, social status, ethnic origin etc.) Archon Fung suggests that in order to avoid the difficulty with voluntarism that results in participation of those who are better-off some mechanism like selection of participants through opinion polling methods or through a demographic representation should be introduced. Another method would be to create some structural incentives for low-status and low-income citizens to participate.³⁹ In the deliberative model deliberative institutions should offer training and education to create informed participants. But such training due to financial costs cannot be widespread. Besides, even the best mechanisms cannot guarantee desirable outcomes, for example they cannot guarantee that deliberative fora will always serve the public interest. Perhaps it is true that for most decisions most of the time citizens' participa-

³⁹ Archon Fung, 'Survey Article: Recipes for Public Spheres: Eight Institutional Design Choices and Their Consequences', *The Journal of Political Philosophy*, Vol. 11, No. 3, p. 342.

tion will be limited due to the size and scale of states and complexity of democratic decisions, and it will be confined to voting for the representatives, expressing public opinions, petitioning, participating in public hearings, and protesting.⁴⁰ But should we accept the minimum and give up any attempts, both theoretical and practical, that aim at achieving something more than the minimum?

Radical democrats are dissatisfied with the dominant mechanisms of political representation because it is ineffective in accomplishing the central idea of democratic politics: "facilitating active political involvement of the citizenry, forging political consensus through dialogue".⁴¹ It is now clear that the central idea of democratic politics can be specified in a number of different ways. The question 'what is democracy for?' or 'what is democracy to achieve?' will always divide democratic theorists and lead to theoretical confusion. This confusion is inherent in the very term democracy; it does not and cannot specify what is truly democratic and what is only a democratic minimum. It does help a little bit when we use the term democracy with the adjective "liberal", but only to set some limits on what can be expected from "liberal democracy". It is these limits that proponents of a normative vision of democracy are dissatisfied with. They agree with liberals in their defence of equal civil rights and their protection through constitutional mechanisms and the limited state (associative democrats would like to limit the state action even further and allow much greater citizens' involvement in dealing with public matters), but they disagree with the role of the citizen as a consumer and someone who pursues his or her goals in the private sphere. They also disagree with the liberal conception of liberty as negative freedom which does not call for individual autonomy through participation in public life. Consequently, radical democratic theory also attempts to rework the concept of liberal democracy and to combine what is truly democratic, according to its proponents, with some liberal minimum.

Classical liberals did not accept the old arguments of critics of democracy who maintained that the knowledge about the good of the whole society could not be accessible to all or a majority, but only to a minority, to those who due to their experience, wisdom or understanding know what decisions should be made in order to advance the common good. But they suggested something else. In the eighteenth century David Hume attacked the pretence of reason to create appropriate rules and institutions for the society and demonstrated that they emerge by a process of gradual evolution, historical trial and error and not as a result of deliberate plan or the will of the majority. Friedrich von Hayek was always suspicious of democracy and subordinated it to liberal ideals of freedom and limited government, arguing that a good order results from spontaneous reciprocity rather than the pursuit of common purposes.⁴² The classical liberal view of individuals as maximizers of their

⁴⁰ Mark Warren, 'What Can Democratic Participation Mean Today?', pp. 687-689.

⁴¹ Introduction in Fung, Wright, *Deepening Democracy*, p. 5.

⁴² See Joseph Femia, *Against the Masses: Varieties of Anti-Democratic Thought Since the French Revolution*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1999, pp. 149-155; Miłowit Kuniński, *Wiedza, etyka i polityka w myśli F. A. von Hayeka*, Ośrodek Myśli Politycznej, Kraków, 1999, chap. 5.

rational self-interest is also irreconcilable with the republican view of individuals as self-governing citizens who associate with others to deliberate on the policies that would promote the public good. There is not doubt that liberal democracy relies on the existence of well-informed citizens who are prepared and willing to assess democratic decisions and policy options. But informed political participation becomes more and more difficult, as the increasing complexity of modern life severely limits the cognitive capacities of people.⁴³ Similarly, it is hard to see what forces and what good arguments would be sufficient to considerably expand popular control over the democratic process and, more importantly, to transform ill-informed and passive citizens into active and rational participants. Schumpeter argues against citizens' direct involvement in deciding the major questions of their society because they are not competent to do so, and their lack of understanding of the issues that are decisive for political decisions would result in them behaving irresponsibly.

According to Dahl's democratic pluralism, Schumpeter's picture of democratic elitism, where it is taken for granted that only those elected to government are competent to make decisions, is too rigid; in a democracy citizens tend to form groups in order to defend their interests and preferences and those various groups (minorities) will influence decisions taken by the government. But if it cannot be guaranteed that all minorities will exercise equal pressure on the government; this can only depend on the financial resources at their disposal and their level of organization, access to the media, etc. Consequently, the proponents of active citizens' involvement in democratic politics through deliberation would argue that only public discussion, where both sides listen to one another's points of view and try to find a solution satisfactory to both, is the key to ensuring that the majority takes the rights and views of a minority seriously. Some of the requirements that such a deliberative process has to meet are, however, not entirely democratic themselves and definitely not republican.

To some extent it is true that, as Cass Sunstein declares, the best thing about republican thought is its commitment to deliberative democracy (or, as others would say, to participatory democracy, but these two are not the same thing). Republican writers would value deliberation as a medium through which citizens can perform their role of active and responsible members of the community. Deliberation would also serve as a way of acquiring necessary civic skills and capabilities. One of those capabilities would be the concern with the public good, and thus immunity to corruption.⁴⁴ Normative democratic theory, at least in its deliberative model, attempts

⁴³ Cf. Danilo Zolo, *Democracy and Complexity: a Realist Approach*, trans. by D. McKie, Polity, Cambridge, 1992.

⁴⁴ Republican writers saw corruption as one of the primary political problems and understood the very term quite broadly. Most often what they meant by it was either moral deterioration or decay, depravity, or the perversion of, say, an institution or custom from its sound condition, a deviation from the principle. This broad meaning also included corruption as a perversion of the integrity and fidelity of a person in his discharge of duty. Generally, corruption was perceived as, above all, the antithesis of virtue and the concern with the private interest instead of the public good. This republican usage of the term can be derived from the very ancient belief that only perception of the

to resolve the old dilemma of political philosophy over the priority of one of the two types of liberty as adequate sources of justification in politics: liberty of the ancients and liberty of the moderns.⁴⁵ This dilemma can be best seen in the debate between the proponents of two traditions: liberalism and civic republicanism. The liberal position, which gives priority to the individual rights of citizens in a modern market society has dominated in modern times over the older republican position, according to which the rights of democratic citizens to participate must come first. The vital point that liberals make and which we can find in Habermas is that individual rights and thus the private autonomy of individuals must be secured for citizens to be in the position to exercise their political autonomy. Democracy that meets the requirements of both types of autonomy has to be founded on discourse and deliberation. Deliberative procedures are to provide ground for what Habermas calls moral normativity that is not prior to deliberation (an ideal discourse), but comprises of norms that would be accepted by all affected parties in the process of deliberation. Objectivity of the norms arises not from their universality, but from them being accepted by the participants of deliberation. Consequently, the status of the norms is temporary; they might be rejected or changed at another time or in another situation.⁴⁶ To Plato and classical philosophy such objectivity would be a contradiction; for them norms, including political norms had as their basis objective values that are discovered, not designed, by deliberating citizens, and thus deliberation aiming at rational consensus cannot change their objective substance independent from the results of the deliberation. For centuries contempt of democracy had its roots in assumed democratic flexibility and instability arising from the changeable will and views of the people. And in modern times many political thinkers who saw democracy as inevitable advocated virtues and institutions associated with the classical republican tradition, such as the rule of law, mixed government, and the values of responsible citizenship. Consequently, I would argue that deliberative democracy—with its appeal to public reason, individual rationality, liberal neutrality, respect for other people, and at the

common good is beyond doubt rational and virtuous whilst perception of one's interest is first and foremost a matter of passion and appetite. Thus pursuing a private and not common interest is 'one of the most deadly means to the corruption of virtue by passion.' See my article 'Corruption and Democratization: A Civic Republican View', *Acta Politica: International Journal of Political Science*, forthcoming in 2006.

⁴⁵ See especially Jürgen Habermas, 'Constitutional Democracy: A Paradoxical Union of Contradictory Principles?', *Political Theory*, Vol. 29, No. 6, 2001. Habermas argues that autonomy of a citizen cannot be realized without autonomy of a private individual, which means that justice and legitimate law must come together. Justice arises from legally guaranteed freedom of choice and equally binding law is legitimate "only if it comes about in a legitimate way, namely according to the procedures of democratic opinion-and-will formation that justify the presumption that outcomes are rationally acceptable." Ibid. p. 779. The public use of reason and the orientation towards public good are expected from citizens seen as democratic legislators.

⁴⁶ For detailed discussion of this aspect of deliberative democracy see Amy Gutmann and Dennis Thompson, 'Deliberative Democracy Beyond Process', *Journal of Political Philosophy*, Vol. 10, No. 2, 2002, pp. 153-174.

same time its stimulation of the sense of community—diverges from republicanism in its preoccupation with, on the one hand, formal procedures of deliberation, and on the other in its fundamental assumption about the temporary nature of all norms of a given political community.

CONCLUSION

The Aristotelian view of citizenship so powerfully advocated by radical democrats does not seem to be an easily attainable goal in today's democracies. Among obstacles are not only the growing complexity, globalization, the lack of opportunities to participate, the dominance of democratic procedures at the cost of democratic values, and the passivity of democratic citizens, but also the dominant historical experience of democracy as based on the division of labour between representatives and citizens. Active citizenship, deliberation, and associationalism are often seen as the way to revitalize democracy and to restore trust in political institutions both in the Western and Eastern contexts. But without civic engagement, without active and responsible citizens' participation in democratic processes and various fora of public deliberation and opinion formation, none of these can be achieved. Yet, as I was trying to show, there are various problems that different models within normative democratic theory need to face and that arise from the assumption about the scope, value and desirable results of active citizenship, among them the problem of the feasibility of their models in terms of making the practice of active citizenship work.⁴⁷

The claims of normative democratic theorists can be strengthened with a more substantive and citizenship-centred concept of civil society than the one that is usually taken for granted by advocates of liberal democracy. The idea of civil society understood as the network of nongovernmental associations and various forms of public activities that bring people together has a civic dimension that relates to the role of the individual as a citizen. It is a sphere where we act not only as private individuals, but also as citizens who associate with others in order to achieve some common goals, to articulate public will, and to converse about immediate common concerns. Consequently, civil society can be seen as a broad and diverse forum for deliberation and cooperation that can guide public policy and the practice of active citizenship. It can constitute a better site for democratization than the state and at the same time a necessary school of democratic skills. We cannot hope, however, that participation in civil society will perform all the functions and fulfil all the goals that radical democrats include in their models. Radical democrats are right in their disaffection with procedural liberal democracy as not offering much to ordinary citizens except their unsatisfactory role as regular voters, but they make too excessive a claim about the highly-desirable influence that active participation can have on the democratic

⁴⁷ Cf. Russell J. Dalton, Wilhelm Bürklin, and Andrew Drummond, 'Public Opinion and Direct Democracy', *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 12, No. 4, 2001, pp. 141-153.

decision-making process. As Norberto Bobbio puts it: "...if it is possible to speak of the process of democratization being extended this should manifest itself less in the transition from representative to direct democracy, as is often maintained, than in the transition from political to social democracy. The issue is less a question of 'who votes?' than of 'where does one vote?'. The development towards greater, more robust democracy depends not on the number of those who willingly exercise their right to participate in making the decisions which concern them, but "in the number of contexts or spaces in which they can exercise this right".⁴⁸ Similarly, for participation to have educational role, in line with John Stuart Mill's argument expressed in *On Liberty*, not the number of those who participate, but the meaning and the influence of participation matters most.

The theory of deliberation calls for a new form of democratic community that excludes no one. Such a claim, as I tried to indicate, is problematic for a number of reasons. In the East European context, where deliberative democracy does not find many advocates – and also among western theorists writing about democratization – participation is not perceived as a value and definitely not as a value in itself. Post-communist democracies in comparison to most western democracies are less stable, less accountable, and are in the process of developing democratic political and legal cultures and civil societies. One can argue that these differences are obstacles to the development of deliberative politics in those democracies. In particular, the lack of a flourishing civil society and the public sphere may be perceived as the main impediments to a broader, civil society-centred model of deliberation. On the other hand deliberative democratic theory brings a universal claim about the role of public reason and equal citizens' right to participate in the "rational" democratic process.

When juxtaposed with democratic minimalism, various forms of radical democracy seem to overlook some deficiencies of the democratic form of government as such. One of them is the antithesis, noticed by political thinkers a long time ago, of civic virtue and self-interest, individualism and a strong sense of community. Modern democracy was invented not because of people's virtues, but rather, as Thomas Paine expressed it, because of their vices.

⁴⁸ Norberto Bobbio, *The Future of Democracy: A Defence of the Rules of the Game*, Polity, Cambridge 1997, p. 32.

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