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Epistemic Democracy and Its Critics

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Daniel Viehoff: Welcome everybody. Thank you for turning up at this uncivilized hour. Let me very briefly introduce the panelists: Nadia Urbinati of Columbia University, Hélène Landemore of Yale University, Jack Knight of Duke University, and I am Daniel Viehoff of the University of Sheffield. The decision we came to, in more or less democratic fashion, was that each of us would speak for about 12-15 minutes and then we'd open it up for questions, because we are all as interested in what you have to say as in what we have to say. And, for lack of any other arrangement, I think we'll just go in alphabetical order.

Jack Knight: When I was asked to participate in this discussion about epistemic democracy and then told that I had to keep it to 10-12 minutes, I thought, I've never kept anything to 10-12 minutes but I will try. I'll try to do even better than that. I was trying to reflect upon these debates and a number of questions that emerged, it seems to me, are subject to disagreement. So what I wanted to do, to start my part of the discussion, was to focus on three of those and try to say what's at stake in the debate, what difference does it make what the answers to particular questions are.

So the first question is, what are the actual effects that are attributed to democratic institutions in the epistemic democracy literature? What are the outcomes in the democratic decision-making process? This is a question that emerges from the advocates of epistemic democracy. The other two questions that I'm going to raise emerge more from the critics of

epistemic democracy. The second question is, What are the conditions necessary for democratic institutions to actually produce these effects that are attributed to them? Do democratic institutions actually do what epistemic democrats say that they do? And the third question is, Why should we give these effects any normative weight or significance?

Let me briefly make some comments about each of the three, then. The first is, What are the actual effects on democratic decisions? There are an ever-increasing range of claims that are made by people who would fall into the category of epistemic democrats. The first, the one that is most traditional, is that democracy under the right kind of conditions can produce true answers, the truth in some kind of sense. And that the collective deliberative process arrives at the truth somehow. That might mean a number of different things, but it could mean that it comes to the truth about a fact of the matter that's relevant to public policy, or it could be the truth about a judgment about what is the common good. So that's one category of claims of actual effects: that it can produce truth somehow. There's a growing group of people who probably think that getting at "the truth" is too strong a claim to make for democratic institutions, but who do think that democracy has epistemic value in producing better decisions. Here the "better decisions" would mean the enhancement of democratic decisions through discussion.

And this is where I've entered into the discussion with my co-author Jim Johnson in a book we wrote a few years ago called The Priority of Democracy [Knight and Johnson 2011], where we looked at three democratic mechanisms and asked, what do they actually do, and what are the effects they can have? The three mechanisms were voting, argument, and reflexivity. To give you an example of the notion of the "better," we took on the challenge of social-choice theory, which makes several claims about how voting undermines the legitimacy of the democratic process. Looking at a lot of research on discourse in a democratic setting, we tried to

try to make a claim that, in fact, an argument can have a positive epistemic effect in terms of people's knowledge about preferences—I can't go into it now—but that was an argument that tried to suggest that the social-choice picture of democracy not being legitimate for various sorts of reasons really can be diminished through argument, that argument has legitimizing effects.

Now the one point I want to make about this in terms of truth—I'm a pragmatist, so truth maybe means something different for me than for many other people—but truth is a standard that if you said, that's what we're trying to achieve, maybe people will understand. If you talk about "better," it's a more slippery criterion: better than what? So if the epistemic democrats are going to use the criterion of "better"—democratic institutions are going to make decision making better in certain kinds of ways—they're going to have to cash out that notion of "better" and on what dimension. I think that's one of the reasons why many of the early pragmatists like Dewey and Pierce were attracted to evolutionary theory, which provided them with a standard they can use in terms of thinking about that particular issue.

Now as I suggested, the critics have raised a number of questions about this type of argument. And I just want to briefly, through those other two questions I suggested, highlight two of the critical claims. One claim is that there is really no empirical basis for believing the epistemic claims that democracy can improve democratic decision making. And the second is that even if it were true that they have these effects, there's no reason to give them any normative weight. So those are two, of how I would see, some of the criticisms.

Jim and I in our book spend a lot of time talking about the conditions necessary for democratic institutions to improve decision making. We talked about it in terms of institutional effectiveness: when might that happen? Because it's not the case that under any type of condition you can have these epistemic effects. Now I actually think this is a weak link in the epistemic

literature; there's insufficient attention to this question of what are the conditions under which these things would actually happen. And I would encourage people who pursue this line of argument to be clear about those conditions. Because I think there is empirical evidence to suggest that democratic institutions have positive epistemic effects in some cases. Now it might make a difference if you believe that the epistemic benefit is truth, as opposed to if you think that the epistemic benefit is better decisions. In terms of truth, it's going to be somewhat harder to make the case because the question becomes, What's the criterion of truth that you're using as a way of assessing the institutions in any particular context? If you have some sort of objective notion of truth and the idea is that citizens are trying to figure out where it can be found, it's going to be hard to sustain the claim that democracy will guide them there, it seems to me. If you have rather a more pragmatic conception of truth, as sort of a convergence of beliefs over time, then it might be more possible to address this type of question in some kind of systematic way.

Just briefly, I want to say that one of the important things we try to address in our book on the subject of "conditions" really goes to one of the challenges that the description of this roundtable raises, which is the issue about power. Some of the critiques of epistemic democrats ask whether if democracy is really just about conflict and power, why are you talking about epistemic qualities? And under some conditions that would be a very good challenge. What we try to argue in our book is that there are conditions that diminish asymmetries of power, then you can make a serious claim that epistemic benefits can take place. So I think there is an argument there that can be addressed against those types of critics that suggest there's no empirical basis for the epistemic benefits in a certain kind of way.

But so what? So what if democratic institutions do have epistemic benefits, why should we give them any normative weight in terms of our justification for democracy? I think that's

really at the heart of many of these debates. The challenge comes from those people who think democracy is better justified by some sort of intrinsic quality.

A couple of things to say about that and then I promise I'll stop. Advocates of epistemic justification somehow have to rest their normative claims to a certain extent, at least—and I think to a great extent—on the consequences of the democratic process. Now this in itself is a debatable point, because some would want to make the claim that the epistemic argument is a procedural argument, others want to make the claim that it's sort of a consequentialist argument. As a pragmatist, I fall on the side that it's a consequentialist argument and I think to the extent that there's any normative weight that should be given to the epistemic benefits of democracy, it has to come from the improvement in the consequences of the democratic process brought about by its epistemic properties. If, rather, you don't want to focus on the consequences, then I think it becomes more complicated.

One last point I want to make about these debates. Many of these debates about justifications of democracy seem to become beside the point in the sense that if you value equality most and if you think that the best way to justify democracy is through the claim about how it instantiates equality, then there's nothing that the epistemic democrats are going to say to you that's going to persuade you otherwise, in a certain sense. If, on the other hand, you value the consequences most, there's very little chance that a claim about equality per se is going to persuade you to change your position. So a lot of these debates seem to be working on separate tracks, without engaging, since it's hard to figure out exactly where the engagement would take place. If you believe—I'll end on this—that there are correct answers to these questions about what the best justification for democracy is, then I think the burden is on you to suggest what the criterion would be that would allow us to assess the relative correctness of the different

arguments. If you're like me and you're a pragmatist and think it's more about the consequences, then we think that the value debate is an irresolvable one and so we focus on the other aspects that I've mentioned.

Hélène Landemore: I titled my little intervention, "Who's Afraid of Epistemic Democracy?" I want to take this opportunity to say a few words this morning about what I take epistemic democracy to mean, and to complement what Jack explained about why it scares people—wrongly, in my view.

Epistemic democracy is not an easy sell. Just the name itself is not clear to a lot of people, and yet I think it's a pairing of two very straightforward terms, the main feature of which is to emphasize the knowledge-producing properties of democratic institutions and procedures; and specifically, as Jack already said, to assume that those procedures are good at tracking a procedure-independent standard of correctness, which is sometimes called "truth."

The formulation of that conception of democracy can be traced back to Joshua Cohen's seminal article from 1986, "An Epistemic Conception of Democracy" [Cohen 1986], in which he was basically providing an antinomy to the aggregate conception of democracy then dominant. He gives three features of an epistemic conception of democracy: voting is a cognitive activity, it's not just an expressive activity of voicing your preference; it presupposes a procedure-independent standard of correctness, something that your voter is trying to approach, in contrast to a view of democracy that says that the right outcome is whatever the procedure defines; and finally, and this is probably less relevant though I mention it anyway, it presupposes a Bayesian updating of your beliefs in light of new information, so it's a cognitive conception of voting and politics in general.

Epistemic democracy is meant to contrast, as I said, with so-called aggregative conceptions of democracy, by which I mean that democracy is just a method to aggregate individual preferences and turn them into a social choice. In that conception voting is just about an expression of unreasoned preferences and we're not aiming for anything beyond that.

Because it opposes aggregative conceptions of democracy, epistemic democracy tends to be confused with deliberative democracy, but they are quite distinct. I would say that epistemic democracy is both a subset of deliberative democracy but also goes beyond it and includes things that deliberative democracy doesn't necessarily include. So deliberative democrats were and still are in my view primarily interested in defining a source of legitimacy for democratic decisions, distinct from that proposed by aggregative democrats. For democratic decisions to be legitimate, deliberative democrats argue, they can't simply be the result of the aggregation of preferences, let alone the bargaining of representatives. They have to be the outcome of a deliberative process characterized by certain features, like equality among the participants, respect, sincerity, fairness, and the exchange of public reasons. When the literature on deliberative democracy became more empirically oriented, other questions became of interest, such as, What are the procedural criteria of equal deliberation? Can they be measured? And there's a cottage industry in the studies that measure the quality of deliberation, and it's become a huge research field.

Epistemic democrats, by contrast, are interested in two other questions. One is normative; it has to do with the nature of democratic authority and democratic legitimacy and whether these should include an instrumental, specifically an epistemic, dimension. In other words, the question is whether the substantive nature and content of democratic outcomes should matter in establishing the authority and legitimacy of such democratic procedures. That's the question most notoriously asked by David Estlund in a 1997 article and his 2008 book, Democratic

Authority [Estlund 1997 and 2008]. Another question which many epistemic democrats have been exploring that's more along the lines of what Jack was explaining is, Do we have reasons to believe that democratic institutions actually have any epistemic properties, that is, do they track the truth or produce good decisions overall in some sense? That's where my work and Jack's work overlaps, I would say. We're concerned more with the descriptive question of whether democracies do have these properties or not. Among the people I probably should mention are Robert Goodin, who actually was scheduled to be here, but couldn't make it from Australia. [*←H: Which work by Goodin should we cite?—J] There is also Josh Ober at Stanford who developed a case study of the epistemic properties of Athens, a specific version of democracy [Ober 2010]. The later Habermas as well has been described as going through an epistemic turn, so he would qualify as an epistemic democrat [Habermas 1996?*]. But in any case, one virtue of that approach, among many, is that it's conducive to a reconciliation between theoretical, normative research and empirical approaches: it allows for a dialogue between normative and empirical theories. On that front, a fruitful shared investigation for normative and empirical theorists alike is the following question: how should we conceptualize the truth, goodness, correctness of democratic decisions or solutions in epistemic democratic theories? There are many possibilities: you can conceptualize it in terms of good governance, human rights, social justice, perhaps a developmental index, a happiness index or something like that, or something else entirely. There are a lot of options. Assuming we can figure that conceptual puzzle out, then there's the question of how do you go about measuring that empirically? There's very little done so far on that, but I think it's necessary to have first questioned that aloud, about measuring first. So I think that's where we are in the field of epistemic democracy.

I should mention another question that I think is perhaps of interest more to philosophers, which is the rational stance of democratic citizens, if they are to assume that democratic institutions have epistemic properties. When you vote and deliberate should you update your beliefs based on the post-deliberative consensus of the group or the outcome of a majoritarian vote? For if, say, a referendum comesout a certain way, what does that say about your own belief if you find yourself in the minority? There a lot of puzzles like that that are explored in the field of social epistemology that haven't quite made their way into the field of political science or political theory. That's a space where I'd like to see political theorists occupy or join with all these other questions.

Now why is epistemic democracy problematic for some people? What do the critics say? Jack already laid out some of the main issues but I'll rephrase them, slightly differently perhaps. One is that epistemic democrats judge democracy not by its intrinsic value but by its instrumental value, as well and in doing so they are said to threaten the intrinsic value of democracy by making it less absolute. One way I've tried to understand this is by seeing the critics' point as saying that we're trying to justify the Mona Lisa by its monetary value and that's the wrong approach, you're actually corrupting the value of that work by approaching it that way. This sort of criticism is partly unintelligible to me. I don't understand why you can't say that something is both intrinsically valuable and instrumentally valuable as well. One precedent for that sort of approach is justice: doing the right thing for itself even while it may also be good for you in the long term. You can have those two thoughts at the same time; I just don't see the contradiction here.

But it's possible that what worries so-called proceduralists like Nadia, actually, is that epistemic democracy seems to question not just the intrinsic view of democracy but the very

principle of political equality underlying it, which I think is a different problem. Here, contrary to Jack, I don't think the proceduralists have a good case for linking political equality to democracy all the way in a neat, custom-tailored way. And that's because it never addresses a very good point made by David Estlund in his book, which is that if your only justification for democracy is that it best expresses political equality, then why don't you go for "queen for a day" or a flip of the coin? You have pretty much the same equality under those rules as under democracy, especially mass democracy, where your vote counts for virtually nothing anyway. So if you don't have a good or an exclusive connection between political equality and democracy, you need an additional argument for democracy. So why don't you welcome the epistemic democrats, who give it to you on a silver platter, who tell you, look, the reason you should go for democracy, majoritarian rule, isegoria, equal right of participating in an assembly, rather than these other forms of political equality, such as queen for a day or a flip of a coin is because when you give people an equal right of speech and an equal vote you'll get better results under certain conditions. So I don't think it's true that epistemic democrats cannot convince proceduralists to endorse their argument, since I think it adds to their case for democracy.

Knight: I wasn't trying to suggest that it wasn't a possibility; I was trying to suggest that it's not happening.

Landemore: I know it's not happening, but I don't know why it couldn't; I don't see why not.

Knight: OK.

Landemore: Another question that critics raise is that by allowing for an epistemic comparison between democracies and autocracies, epistemic democrats risk making democracies look bad, less efficient, less truth-tracking than liberal autocracies than Singapore or China. Even Estlund seems to worry about that since he precludes the possibility entirely by invoking general acceptability requirements that would rule out autocracies—as if to say "Look, I'm not even going there." But I go there and I don't see why it's a problem. I think we can show, people like Jack Knight and myself try to show, that under the right conditions, you're better off using a democratic method than a non-democratic one. It could be that under certain conditions you could be better off with a more autocratic approach. But because Jack and I don't exclude procedural arguments that may be a tradeoff you'd want to consider, that in some cases procedural arguments trump epistemic arguments and we need more work to show when and where we're willing to balance those complementary considerations. So I wouldn't rule out the question just because there's a risk involved; that's not a scientific approach to anything.

Another problem that I've seen critics raise is with this whole concept of truth, better outcome, or a procedure-independent standard of truth or correctness: people ask how would we know what such a standard is? And if there's no other way, then we need a democratic procedure to approach it or figure it out to get at it, and then we're basically begging the question. So if you say, look, there's got to be another way to meet that standard, then if there is another standard, then why don't we use that, rather than the democratic procedure? That critique I think is a very interesting one.

My answer, and I'm still working it out, is that when it comes to empirical truths you just check out for yourself whether the solutions proposed by democrats actually work or not. That's

what the social sciences are about; it requires a complex analysis of the real world, and there are all sorts of problems making causal claims between certain decisions and certain outcomes and you have to think factually, but I think it's not impossible to try to assess that. The world is in fact your test in a way, at least for the factual dimension of epistemic democracy. One problem is that there's a time dimension as well. So in the here and now you can't project yourself four years from now and say, look, we chose the right president or that economic policy was the right. In the here and now, at time T, you don't have an alternative to a decision that would either involve the few or the many. All I'm saying is that at time T you'll likely better off with the decision that involves more people.

For the normative, moral dimension, moral truth, it gets more complicated of course. For the abolition of slavery, you can't just say, well, it works better. In terms of human happiness, clearly, it works better for all involved, but why should that be the criterion? But we can define differently the criterion of success here, maybe it's the convergence towards what people call "hyper-norms" [←citation needed], that is, norms that are spreading among nations, like human rights, abolition of torture, or different forms of war practices. It gets very complicated, but I don't think that complexity should be an obstacle to trying to think about these things.

Finally the last question I see critics of epistemic democracy raise is that it is too idealistic. Even if we grant that there is a procedure-independent standard of correctness, that's really a framework or conception that may be relevant to the type of politics that goes on in tiny Scandinavian villages, but surely everywhere else, the value diversity that characterizes national politics makes epistemic democratic assumptions utopian. So maybe epistemic democracy is not conceptually wrong, it's just that it's politically irrelevant. That's a very good question, but I think it's an empirical question that has to be settled empirically. Let's see what happens, how

robust are epistemic democrat models to the introduction of value diversity, and I very much think we don't know yet and that's still an open question.

Nadia Urbinati: Thank you for inviting me here. I would like to take a few minutes to tell you why I'm not convinced that we learn to vote by voting; that by using democratic procedures, meaning voting, counting votes, we learn how to do it. It is very problematic for me to show that it is possible and also, it seems to be a kind of irrelevant issue. It is irrelevant because I don't believe that democracy, ancient and modern, to the extent that it has one history, emerged as a standard for achieving correct decisions—that was never the point. For instance, I was looking for citations through history and the beginning of democracy was in the name of the basic condition of equality of human beings, liberty, equal rights, representation, power sharing, the capacity to come through with real consent. This is what we learn from emancipationists in the nineteenth century like Susan Anthony, Thomas Paine, who referred to, not truth or wisdom when they called for equal representation, but instead demanded the release from political slavery and the right to bear rights. They thought the right to vote for representatives is the primary right by which other rights are protected.

So it's a question of rights protection, which means it's a question of liberty protection. So equal liberty is the real goal of democracy, we want it for this reason. We may make a lot of mistakes in using these rights and this equal liberty, we may produce bad decisions. The decision to dismantle the welfare state in Europe is a bad decision, opposed by many democrats, it's bad from my point of view and the point of view of many others like me. That is we don't pay attention to the fact that when we enter this climate of liberty, engagement, discussion, we produce arguments that are sometimes based on values, and thus are partisan, and are thus never

so epistemic in their own content. Perhaps they pretend or they give us the sense that they are going to produce a better decision, but that is very difficult to say. But certainly, this is a rhetorical argument when we enter politics. And then there's the aporia that we have to wait until the outcome is produced in order to judge on the epistemic thickness of these processes. Can we say in advance that these are good? Or do we have to wait until the outcome is produced? And if we have to wait until it is produced, then what is time T, where we decide this is the truth about that decision?

The other concern is—I think it's true that we have to convince the autocrat that democracy is better and perhaps a good way of convincing an autocrat is by insisting that democracy is not second in relation to the ability in producing good decisions. But I'm not convinced myself that I would be happy with this kind of defense. I would like to say more, that democracy does much more than creating the conditions for good possible decisions, which we always want. The additional thing it does is, it gives us the certainty that any decision can be revised: no matter how good, or perfect, and no matter how incredibly important it is. And this for me is the great relevant contribution of democracy. This is its substance because it presumes that we are always free to revise our decisions, which presumes that we are fallible in our inferences. We can of course make big mistakes, we are not gods after all, which is why we need democracy. Together we can achieve a revision of what we have done before.

So I am very sympathetic with one aspect of the epistemic discourse, particularly in Hélène's book: the description of how together, meaning in a cooperative way, different people with their own different mentalities and different diversities and cognitive interests, they're able to cooperate for a common cause. This is the pragmatic element of democracy as a way of living together in such a discursive way and accepting to count heads when we disagree and giving up

this idea that there is unanimity. Unanimity is not the source of democracy, it's majority rule because we presume permanent disagreement. And we presume permanent disagreement; unless we don't assume that there is a search for truth, I think we can agree that we search out the better, this I can agree, and that it is better that it be measured. Measure it, somehow, but the measurement is always open to judgment and my judgment can be different from yours because we don't have a mathematical measurement; this is politics, after all. For this reason—it's not to trash or to vilify the value of an epistemic effort to make democracy better in the eyes of those who don't believe in democracy—but only that for those who don't believe in it, it's only to not ask from it more than it can promise.

What democracy can promise is equal liberty to revise. And that is hugely important. It's not something minor, it's very substantial because it has the ability, which for me is very important—the intrinsic quality of democracy is the ability to maintain equal political liberty through time. So to reproduce itself, this is the outcome issue: to reproduce itself in its own foundation. It's not a one-time event, democracy, it's a practice in testing, maintaining, maintenance programs, actually. Maintaining democratic procedures, this is what political democracy does.

But if we agree on that, don't we think that the epistemic moment is little bit redundant? Because liberty, we said, and we can all accept, is the justification for the substance of democracy, not some specific outcome, because nobody can select one specific outcome or that would be the sovereign. So not even when some experts judge something correctly, liberty is a justification and substance without paying too much attention to what the experts tell us.

Now procedures are by definition regulated doings with an open outcome, we know that. Democratic procedures are driven by the goal of reproducing the democratic condition itself. In

this sense—and this is very important for me—they cannot produce unjust results, or results that deny the condition for democracy, such as labor and gender domination, ethnical or cultural privileges. A democratic decision is unjust if it violates its very own principle, if it produces outcomes that are against its own possibilities for reproducing itself.

So if this is the just outcome, is it not enough an epistemic outcome inside of the system, inside of the procedure? Is not this the good and the just? As a matter of fact, constitutional checks on the legislative assembly are intended not to make lawmakers act according to some epistemic criterion of truth, but to make them act legitimately, that is, according to the principle of democracy, and responsibly, that is, in order for the people to be able to judge what they do. These are indeed the normative requirements for a good, and in this case procedurally correct, political process of decision making. As Frank Michelman has argued many times, lawmaking procedures produce laws that are valid, not that are true. Robert Post has applied this argument to the defense of free speech, the First Amendment, arguing that indeed the First Amendment doesn't protect good speech or correct speech, but free, but also perhaps wrong. So this is the goodness, of democratic outcomes, to reproduce the good condition that makes democracy possible. Is this not an epistemic thickness? Is it not enough? And is it not redundant to insist on more?

Finally, a very, very last point, I ask myself, why now is there an epistemic need, why now this epistemic call? Why is it not enough now to say we go to vote, everyone should go to vote, and to ask for participation in the political process, regardless of our desired outcomes? Why now the infiltration of this technocratic mentality of solving problems, which makes us think of democracy as another name for technocratic doing with the approval of the people? Plato is not democratic even if he is egalitarian because he presumes some equal condition that

we all have. There is an element of equality, but it's not democratic. So my question, then, and I finally conclude, is whether, perhaps underneath, unconsciously, there is a sense that this old democratic ambition of solving questions of disagreement through voting is insufferable. How can a vote be asked for when the question is the truth? Truth cannot be voted on or against. It makes no sense, and this is outrageous, that you decide by voting, by raising hands, by counting, equal quantitative portions of our will—how can this be?

Indeed, in some of the literature recently criticizing incompetent voters, Bryan Caplan wrote rthat because there are certain people, habitual nonvoters, whose "absence on election days is a good thing as it actually helps democracy work better" [←Citation needed]—better not to vote than to vote incompetently.

The epistemic deficiencies identified by some epistemic social scientists or political scientists are generally of two types: either many voters don't know how to get what they want or they don't know how to want what they should. Caplan reports on survey data showing that "most voters are deeply confused about their own interests, about why their beliefs about economics is systematically mistaken."[←Citation needed] So better not to vote, and better to select those who know better. Or concentrate on the small number of persons selected by the followers from the general mass as more likely to possess the information and discernment to solve the complicated questions, so that small groups, deliberative small assemblies are better than voting.

The epistemic democrats are able to make me think a lot about the value of democracy, regardless of the outcome that democracy gives us—since democracy may give us very bad decisions. But we wouldn't exchange it for another system, also because we are those who decide which decision is better or not. If self-government and the immanent principle of

judgment concerning the truth so-called are at issue, if we are the actors and the judges all together, there is no such thing as an external reference point of view; otherwise that external reference point of view is the source of sovereignty for judging democracy. But for now, democracy is sovereign.

Daniel Viehoff: I, like Nadia, face the problem of deciding whether I should say what I was meaning to say when I came in, or respond to what has been said by my co-panelists. But I think I'll take a middle course. Let me begin by briefly saying something about how we should understand epistemic democracy, and talk of 'truth' in the political context: One insight that's come out of the recent discussions of epistemic democracy is that we can adopt a characterization of what is 'epistemic' about epistemic democracy that is more sophisticated than what has traditionally been offered. As a result, I don't think we should find talk of 'truth' in politics too worrying. I think it's pretty clear that we have a good grasp of what the relevant epistemic concerns are in the individual domain. We know that there are contexts where there are more or less correct beliefs, and we know that there are types of belief formation that are more or less reliable relative to those standards of correctness. And whatever those standards are, we can ask broadly similar questions about the reliability of democracy, about collective decision making, without having any deep, serious commitments either to what exactly the truth is or to there being somebody who has independent access to the truth. Just as we can think that people have a better or worse grasp of what morality requires, and that you can have more or less reliable moral judgments on a variety of issues, without thinking that there is someone out there who has a full grasp of the moral truth, so the same thing can be said about democracy. When we discuss the epistemic dimension of democracy, the epistemic virtues that democracy purportedly

has, we refer to the ways in which democratic procedures may be more or less reliable in tracking whatever the relevant moral standards are, more or less reliable compared to other forms of decision making. All of this is just by way of an initial characterization of how we should think about epistemic democracy.

Now I think Jack was exactly right in highlighting that we must distinguish among a variety of questions we want to ask about epistemic democracy. My focus is going to be solely on the question of what he called its "normative significance." Here is my thought: Let's grant for now that a lot of the arguments for the epistemic virtues of democracy in fact succeed— although I have some comments on that later. That still leaves open the question of what exactly follows from democracy's epistemic virtues. It seems to me that our discussions of epistemic democracy are sometimes less useful than they could be because of a failure to distinguish between a variety of conceptually and practically quite separate normative questions that we want to ask about democratic institutions. Here I want to draw a distinction between just two— there are more one could invoke, but two will do for us this morning. One question is of an institution's justification or justifiability, which I take to be a question about whether this institution is worth having or not worth having. Is having this institution preferable to having no institution, or another institution that fulfills roughly similar tasks? If you want to make this more concrete, you can think of this as the question we have to ask ourselves when engaging in institutional design. If we want to establish a set of institutions, should we establish this set of institutions or try to establish others?

This is importantly distinct from what I call the question of democracy's authority. The question of democracy's authority is the question whether democratic outcomes, which I take to be decisions, have a certain normative quality for those to whom they purportedly apply. It asks:

'Do those who count as subjects or citizens have reason to go along with a decision even if they may substantively disagree with it?' This is a point that Nadia emphasized as being crucial – the Michelman point about validity that runs through our thinking about laws, and indeed through our thinking about democracy. Putting that point slightly more generally: If you think democracy is a decision-making procedure, and if you adopt what I would think is the best account of decision-making, which views decisions as binding reasons of a certain sort, then an adequate theory of democracy has to explain how it can be that the outcome of a democratic procedure is a binding decision, is a binding reason for those people whom it purports to bind. That is a really important question that we want to keep an eye on in democratic theory, even though I think it tends to be somewhat neglected.

The reason I draw this distinction between justification and authority is the following: I think there are very plausible arguments for believing that epistemic considerations simply can't be ignored when we think about justifications for institutions. Here is a very easy way to see this: Just limit yourself to the choice among democratic institutions. Just consider various ways of ordering institutions, all of which would be democratic in a variety of ways – unicameral legislatures or bicameral ones, institutions that grant veto powers to some players, rules that require some period during which deliberation takes place before a vote is taken, and so on. It seems to me that, when we think of these choices, we cannot but consider whether, these arrangements are going to be beneficial from an epistemic point of view. It just seems to me difficult to ignore the significance of such epistemic considerations. They may not be decisive. There may be other considerations. Nonetheless, when we choose among various forms of democratic institutions, there is a clear concern with various epistemic virtues that might or

might not be instantiated. Thus at the level of justification, there is almost always going to a place for epistemic considerations.

The crucial point I want to make now is that things gets a lot more difficult when we turn to democracy's authority. I tend to think that appeals to epistemic considerations are a fairly implausible basis for establishing our duty to obey democratic decisions even though we disagree with them. This isn't because I believe that epistemic considerations can never justify practical authority. Sometimes somebody's greater reliability or expertise does indeed ground my duty to obey them. Just consider a very simple case: I'm on a plane, somebody has a heart attack, I could easily save them, I just don't know how. My wife happens to know how, but she can't do it herself. If she now directs me to take certain steps to save the victim, I almost certainly have a duty to do as she directs me to do.

So it's not in principle impossible to derive practical authority from epistemic reliability or epistemic virtues. But there are a variety of issues in the political domain and in the domain of democracy that make this inference from epistemic virtue to authority a lot more difficult. I just want to flag three of them. The first is this: it's very important to recognize that, when we want to establish, on epistemic grounds, A's authority over B, one person's authority over another, then we can't do this simply by showing that A is generally really reliable or epistemically virtuous. To establish A's authority over B on epistemic grounds requires a comparative claim: A is more reliable than B. Just think back to the earlier example: I don't need to do what my wife tells me to do on the plane if, though she's a very reliable judge of how to save someone's life, so am I. Now let's turn back to democracy's authority. Since we're talking about authority over citizens, an argument that appeals to democracy's epistemic virtues to justify its authority, has to establish that the outcome of democratic procedures is more reliable than the judgment of

individual citizens. This is very important, because it means that a certain strategy that's been influential in thinking about the virtues of democracy, while generally useful for thinking about democracy's justification, just doesn't get much of a grip on the question of authority. I have in mind here arguments which establish that democratic deliberation improves the judgment of individual participants in the deliberative process. Because if that's all democracy does, then it doesn't in fact improve the relative reliability of the democratic outcomes vis-à-vis the individual judgment. Rather, it undermines the very gap that you need to establish the authority of the outcome for the particular subject.

My second point is this. Elsewhere I argue that the fact of greater reliability isn't yet sufficient to establish the subject's reason to treat as binding the outcome of the procedure. It also has to be the case that the subject is in a position to reliably identify the would-be authority as more reliable [Viehoff, Forthcoming]. Here is why it is important: Quite frequently, by virtue of the sheer fact that I'm not a good judge of what I morally ought to do, I'm also not a good judge of who's a good judge of what I morally ought to do. I don't improve my epistemic situation by trying to defer to other people; I just replicate the problem of uncertainty that I have, in regards to the substantive matter, when I instead try to rely on the authority of someone – or some procedure – more reliable than I am. Now I think this is important because at least some of the arguments that epistemic democrats have advanced for establishing the greater reliability or the epistemic virtues of democratic decisions depend on conditions with regard to which ordinary citizens are usually not reliable judges. The most obvious case is the Condorcet Jury Theorem, which depends on assumptions about the reliability of one's fellow citizens in casting their vote. But that's just the kind of thing about which I don't have any reliable information. The fact that there's an outcome of a certain sort that is a result of their casting their votes in a

certain way doesn't yet give me reason to defer to their votes, because I cannot reliably determine whether the conditions are met that would make the outcome of the voting procedure especially reliable.

The third point, which is also crucial, is the following: In the political domain, unlike in the case that I mentioned about deferring to my wife's authority, claims are in regard not only to means, but also to ends. My wife tells me how to save the victim of the heart attack. I have reason to do what she tells me to do if, in fact, I have reason to save him. But my wife doesn't claim the power to tell me that I must save him even if I have in fact no reason to do so. By contrast, political authority doesn't just tell us: 'Here's what you ought to do, assuming you have good reason to do X! Here's how much tax you should pay, assuming there's good reason to have a redistributive tax system!' Rather, the state claims for itself the power to determine that certain ends are ones we ought to pursue, to adopt. But that ups the ante a whole lot for establishing the epistemic virtue that we would want our political institutions to have. For instance, if you think that democratic authority makes this kind of claim, then to establish that democracy has political authority on epistemic grounds, you'd have to show that democracy is more reliable than individual subjects are with regards to the question what ends are worth pursuing. This is essentially a moral judgment, and I think many people worry that the arguments we have for democracy's epistemic virtue don't extend easily to cases of moral judgment. I think Hélène actually more or less concedes something like this in her book, and it's one of the questions she leaves us with: Can the epistemic argument for democracy be extended to the choice of ends? I think there are reasons for thinking it can't be. The conditions of the Hong-Page theorem, on which Helene centrally relies, are such that it's very difficult to see how one can extend it to the case of moral disagreement [Hong and Page 2012]. I think that's one of the

challenges one has to face as an epistemic democrat, at least if one wants to give a full account of the normative significance of democracy.

I want to finish by raising one question, which I don't really know what to think of, but that seems to go to the heart of some of our discussion. I think people who are not epistemic democrats, and who think that democratic authority is most plausibly grounded in broad considerations of equality, must ask themselves the following: Granting that there are certain issues with regard to which democracy lacks the authority it ought to have, what's the normative significance of that when it's traded off against its actually making better decisions? So how do we think about claims to authority that democracy has vis-à-vis claims about the quality of democratic outcomes, even if these outcomes lack authority? To make this most concrete: Imagine people who mistakenly believe they have reason to follow democratic decisions. But as it happens, these decisions are in fact more reliable than decisions made in other ways. That seems to me to be a really deep normative issue, a different question about how to think conceptually about the relationship between outcomes and the demands of authority in thinking about decision making institutions. Getting a better grip on that might help us understand how various tradeoffs may or may not be possible and help us understand why some people think that there just there isn't room for tradeoffs.

I get to continue now, qua chair, as we open the floor for discussion. One point worth raising, which I should have raised at the start, is that Critical Review is hoping to publish the proceedings of this panel. I understand one thought might be to include some of the comments from the Q & A. If you'd be willing to be included in this way, please make sure to come to the front or take this recording device so that your question is properly recorded as we proceed.

Jeffrey Friedman: If you would identify yourself, your name, and institution clearly so we can get your permission to publish the results, that'll help us.

Michael Mosher, University of Tulsa: This is a question directed more or less to Nadia and to Hélène. I guess I find it undeniable that pragmatic consequences of democracy count, let's say for instance that you're a deep egalitarian but you find that the more egalitarian a democracy tends to become the less it can avoid disastrous wars, depression, inability to address obvious truth claims, the kind of things most democracies have difficulty doing but so do all other systems of government. But I would say that even Nadia is an epistemic democrat on the Tocquevillian criterion that you have the equal right to revise; for if you believe that this equal right to revise does not actually improve things, then it's just making new decisions for the sake of making new decisions. So you must believe that you're revising for the sake of improving and as a consequence, to some extent, you too are concerned with the epistemic outcome, as Tocqueville was, of democracy.

But my question to Hélène is, having read her book and been very impressed by it, and indeed impressed by all the arguments for democracy that's implicit in many of the things Nadia said is implicit in the argument for both proceduralism and majority rule, nevertheless I keep thinking that as I'm reading this text, I'm reminded of Rousseau who thought of himself as a realist but his book, the Social Contract is taken as an ideal statement of an impossibility, and now Hélène has written a kind of similar book, where she and I think Jack Knight as well, specifying all of the very difficult-to-achieve conditions, such that now we can actually use the old Soviet phrase, actually existing socialism to refer to what we have as actually existing democracy. Don't those kinds of high standards as opposed to adopting some more minimal

standard, don't they actually tend to delegitimize actually existing democracy? If your work becomes more public, let's say, outside of this room, or outside of the panel, is it possible that this will have a depressing and deflationary effect on actually existing democracy?

Landemore: One response is Vive la Revolution! Yes, it's possible but in fact the depressing conclusion I kind of reached is that I don't think we have any real democracies anywhere. The truth is you can look at democracy on a continuum, and so what I describe is kind of on the high extreme of the continuum and where we live is really low. So writing that book made me realize, wow, I thought I grew up in a democracy—not really. And I thought I came to a democracy, the U.S., and I think socially it's more true than France, but politically absolutely not. We've got the social-scientific evidence to prove it, like Martin Gilens and Ben Page, that's right there, there's zero statistical correlation between the will of the majority and policy outcomes, what more do we need [Gilens and Page 2014]? So this is not democracy. So we can keep using "democracy" to feel good about ourselves but we're not really living in one. So as for the effect my book will have. We also are in a crisis stage so maybe it's time to think a little bit outside of the box and revisit things like elections; it all sounds utopian, and I don't expect my book to have any of the impact that you're describing so I'm not too worried. I'm a political theorist, that's what I do, why can't I push that kind of thought to an extreme? I'm not sure if your question is asking me to be more sensitive to the practical implication of my thinking and I never thought that way and don't think I'm going to start now.

To the point Nadia made that democracy should be defined as constitutional democracy so all the epistemic benefits we describe should in fact built into the definition so we don't have to talk about that anymore, and beyond that it's all proceduralism and it doesn't matter whether it

leads to good outcomes. I disagree with that, because what you build into a constitutional democracy is not enough, you're going to build in certain things like protection of individual rights, but that's not enough, you can have a regime that does that but still fails to produce economic policies that work for the community. I think it's more demanding, epistemic considerations are more demanding than just that baseline. And also I think that's a much broader debate to explore in depth, as before, is democracy just a certain majoritarian procedure combined with some deliberation, and then we add the liberal framework and call that democracy, or do you want to have a thick conception of democracy that makes it constitutional by definition?

Basically it's a question of whether constitutional democracy is a redundant phrase. I start from a thin conception because I think the constitutional part I would want to add, I'd want to give an evolutionary account of it. You start with a thin conception, just talking together, taking a vote, and then as you learn over time that if you just do that without building a safeguard you'll end up violating minority rights and do all sorts of wrong things and undermine the conditions of what you already have. And then you add the constitutional and liberal apparatus but it's conceptually and analytically distinct. I'll stop here.

Urbinati: Very briefly, on this issue, well, I try to define democracy to get at two elements: the institutional and the extra-institutional, and sometimes extra-procedural. We can discuss without institutions and procedures, or we can disagree without talking to each other, we can turn our back toward others. When we go to vote, you need to say, I take with myself many things, my visions, my idiosyncratic beliefs, my desires, so the vote is a kind of registration of many, many things, belonging to a situated citizen, which is never an abstraction. But we need to

abstract in order to make judgments concerning what these citizens are doing. Constitutional life is also outside institutions, it's an ethical way of practicing as citizens, so the word "constitution" is itself a way of learning how to live together.

The other question is about the diversity: I have a note in my presentation and I skipped it, but epistemic diversity, this is a great important point, that we have diverse perspectives and capabilities, but would you also agree on value diversity? We are all different in our knowledge in our comprehension of what we do, in our understanding, but do we assume also value diversity? That is a more complicated issue because you presume, you're very clear, a unanimous condition/conception of what is the value of liberty, why do we value equal liberty. So we need to have a unanimous view on value, at least on one thing, in order to have epistemic diversity working; otherwise, the diversity brings us to disagreement that is unsolvable, and that is a choice you can't make from an epistemic view.

Knight: Just a couple of quick things, on this issue of delegitimizing democracy. I agree with what Hélène said, I think our work in many ways does do that. I worry about that somewhat. In the acknowledgment of that book with Jim Johnson, I said that there are days when people ask me, why do you spend so much time writing about democracy, look how horribly it works? And I think there's something to that. Now I thought you might be suggesting—or some people have suggested—the political theory equivalent to the point they make about teaching microeconomics to undergraduates, that if we teach them microeconomics with the assumption of self-interest, we'll corrode their community and they'll become what the model suggests they'll be, and we may be doing that comparably, if we focus just on the instrumental consequence of democracy, are we doing that too? That, I have no idea.

Landemore: On this point, I'm not sure we're saying the same thing. You're conceding that by talking about the instrumental properties of democracy we're delegitimizing it.

Knight: No, I'm not. I was just saying that was a separate point.

Landemore: so then I agree. But when you say we're delegitimizing democracy, no, no, no, we're delegitimizing what passes as democracy. I would call that representative government, some kind of mixed regime with populist elements with lots of aristocratic features. We're not delegitimizing democracy, if anything we're elevating the real concept of democracy by showing that it has properties that we didn't even know it had and it's better than we thought. If there's anything positive coming out of this, we should try to tweak the current system to bring it closer to what we call democracy. One of the implications in my view, which I don't think would be revolutionary and dangerous, is we should probably try to include more people in the process, listen more carefully to what people have to say and make the representative system act more representative about what people want. And there are all sorts of things that can be done. I see Jim Fishkin in the room; we can try to practice, have deliberative systems that are actually being done and thought about at the grassroots level. You never hear about at the national level, there must be reasons why.

Knight: Can I just say, I want to clarify, the delegitimizing I was talking about was about existing institutions. You need to understand, Hélène always brings me back in when I fall off

the wagon. I didn't used to think about myself as an epistemic democrat until she told me that I was, so we're still sorting that out.

The one other thing I want to say, you asked what we meant by democratic procedures. Actually, I also work with a fairly thin conception of that, looking at certain basic mechanisms that I think a lot of different forms of institutions have in terms of majority rule, free discourse, reflexivity, those kinds of things, I don't think there's that much work done, but I think it would be interesting to do that, to look at more specific types of decision making within the democratic umbrella and to see if some of those which have some of these mechanism and have other details too, may enhance or not the sort of epistemic aspect, so I don't think there's been much work done.

Viehoff: I wanted to say one final thing on this—I don't mean to say it's final, but another observation—on this worry about delegitimizing institutions, because I'm not sure either of you quite did justice to that worry. Here is how I would put it: Someone might say, 'Look, you talked a lot about the epistemic dimension of democracy. But I'm less optimistic than you are that it's under the control of the state to do all that would be required to instantiate a system that would have epistemic success. So if I have misgivings about the epistemic argument for democracy, then what's left, given that we haven't been told anything else about the other values, the procedural values?' That person might walk away thinking, 'There was one argument for democracy's legitimacy. It didn't pan out. So let's go for some other form of government.' There's a perfectly good answer to that thought: there are other democratic values we care about, egalitarian values, etc. But I think that people sometimes worry that the emphasis put on epistemic considerations makes it seem like that it's an exclusive consideration.

Landemore: That's very true.

Urbinati: This is very important in my view, because democracy stands for everything now, it's an ideological definition, very dangerous in my view because democracy is just a political system, a political way of solving our disagreements in a way that allows us to solve all the time, continuously. But the question of economic equality for instance, this would require a social argument more than a democratic argument. Yes, we need to have perhaps basic conditions for a democracy, but who knows if the basic condition of being more affluent translates into me going to vote? We tend to give democracy too much of this business to do. I mean, economic equality, diversity, ethical formation, these are perhaps other issues.

Viehoff: OK, let's collect more questions.

Sam Bagg from Duke. The question is, one way you might improve the epistemic quality of decisions is to argue directly for what you think the right answer is. But that can't be everything that an epistemic democrat is supposed to do, for in order for epistemic democracy to have different recommendations or different outcomes than some theory of justice or some other theory, whatever its competitors are, you have to have some situations where there are tradeoffs between the right answer or what you think the right outcome should be and what epistemic democracy recommends, a conflict between some procedural or something that would improve epistemic quality overall versus getting the right answer in the moment. So I wonder, are there

situations like that? Is epistemic democracy going to have different outcomes than whatever the right substantive answer is, and how do you make those kinds of tradeoffs?

My name is Anthoula Malkopoulou and I'm from Uppsala University. My question is, if we accept that we can have a synthetic view, it can be both transcendental, which I don't, but let's say we do, then I have the feeling that procedural democrats have something to say about the outcome, that the outcome would be good if we respect the value of the procedure, which is equal liberty. And I wonder what epistemic democrats would say for the procedure, what is the value that the procedure should uphold, because there's too much emphasis for epistemic democrats to have a best decision, a right decision, a true decision, whatever, and too little on what would be the way to reach them. I wonder, do you completely endorse the deliberative democratic kind of procedural ideas, or some others? And which would be the value by them?

Jim Fishkin from Stanford. I was struck by the comments about the question how much diversity does democracy require in values and attitudes as opposed to other considerations, I suppose. Now, as I recall from Hélène's book, she shares with me the idea that random sampling, well done, should be a basis for deliberation and she then attributes epistemic virtues or claims to the results. Let's set the epistemic part aside for a second and say, if you take a good random sample, adequate in size, you would have whatever diversity there is in attitudes as well as in demographics in the population, whatever diversity there is. Now as you say, rightly, at some point if there's enough diversity, enough contention, some of the people may not subscribe to democracy at all and that could be a problem, a kind of what Dahl many years ago called severe asymmetric disagreement, you could have that. Nevertheless, you can have a representative

microcosm through sampling. Now that microcosm, its representativeness, to me, from my perspective, is very important since it supports a hypothetical inference about what the people would think about something under good conditions for thinking about it. Now, if you had a really perfect, actually existing democracy you would have everybody deliberating or thinking. Then the whole will of the people wouldn't be a hypothetical inference about what the people would think, it would be what the people really do think. But normally, the slam-bang competition of competitive bamboozling efforts—look at the circus we see unfolding before us—is enough of a distraction, and it's a skillful, well-paid distraction, that the public has difficulty determining the truth of any issue that's before it; look at the immigration issues that are being debated now. So if you had the microcosm really deliberate under the best possible conditions, you would get a sort of Habermasian forceless force of the better argument. Maybe. Or that becomes, as Hélène said, an empirical question that we investigate empirically.

Now I've actually pushed Hélène on the question, if diversity is so good epistemically, maybe more diversity would be even better. But she has stuck with the same view that I have defended, which is, you want the diversity that is actually representative, you want a good random sample, you don't want to go even further. But that's because I'm interested in the inference about what the people would think if they were really thinking about it. Now whether that inference has epistemic force, whether it's the best decision in some sense? I think it is, but then it's a sometimes contested best decision because there're competing values, there are competing empirical claims about what might happen, you know every political viewpoint has their own set of experts, their own economists, their own econometrician magicians who'd say this would happen, that would happen, the battle of the magic asterisks, you know as Krugman says, so nobody really knows what would happen. So maybe there's a kind of range of the

plausible, and deliberative democracy probably would yield a conclusion in the range of the plausible, which has one other merit, not really mentioned but I think you really allude to it, which is, the "we-ness" of it, the fact that the people can take ownership of it, it's not just somebody revises or corrects, we revise, it's done with authority in the name of the people, the people can say, this is something we believe in on balance when we think about it.

And so whether you want to call that an epistemic virtue, sometimes there may be a conflict between the best solution in terms of democracy or even the best solution in terms of the general welfare and the best solution in terms of justice or some other value, or equality, there may be other contested values that people will sincerely disagree about. But that itself is something that can be brought to a public arena, where people can really think about it. So I want to clarify, you want that amount of disagreement about values that's actually in the population, if you want the process to have external validity, if you want to make this inference about what the people would think rather than just some group of them.

Urbinati: Just a quick answer. I ask you a question: because the experimentation you perform is so fascinating and so important. My question is: are we the same citizens when we make an experimentation when there is nothing at stake there, when we have no interest there, and then a situation, when we have to go to vote and discuss, not because we're experimenting the situation, but because we act as citizens? Do you think we act the same? I think the experimentation doesn't tell us, because it's about ideal subject conditions; because people are supposed to listen, to discuss, to exchange, they have nothing at stake, so they can't decide. But when we have many interests to carry on, when we go to vote, when we discuss, perhaps we are

no longer the same subject, so democracy is where in this case, here in the experimental moment or here in the practical moment.

Fishkin: Can I answer quickly (I know I'm violating all the norms). So we increasingly, do our deliberative projects in contexts where voice matters, in some sort of policy-relevant context, often where the government is wrestling with some terrible problem, such as the Japanese national government: whether they're going to reform their pension system through privatization or increasing taxes. Or Texas utilities, where they're going to get their energy from, so we led them to increasing wind power in Texas, we led them to raise the taxes rather than privatize in Japan and Africa now we're doing it with policies in Uganda and Ghana about water sanitation, health. All over the world, we're doing it in contexts, so the trick is to get people to pay attention, to think their voice matters. So you're right, the work in television programs, people say, I'm on television, my voice matters; that worked better than people thought. But the problem is to overcome rational ignorance, one voice in million, but if you have one voice in fifteen and one way to sample 300 or 400, do you think your voice matters? Even better, in a policy context, if the policy makers are there on the panel, they see the results and they do actually follow through and implement the results, then you are actually more influential in the deliberative poll than you are in one vote in a million in an actual election. Well, it's just the condition of our society that as one voter in many millions, you know, you don't have a lot of rational reason to pay attention, so I think you're right, it's a really fundamental challenge to these experimentations, but increasingly we're trying to find contexts where it's plausible to say to the people your voice will matter. In China, where they're actually making budgets in local towns, we just did one in a part of Shanghai, in Wen Ling, in various places where they don't

have party competition in democracy, but there are actually lots of people in local governments making the government's budget. You might say it's not a democracy; certainly China's not a democracy in general, but it's a very important thing what a government does with its money, and they're making their budgets, so it's actually more democratic than local governments in any place I've lived. So that would be my answer.

Paul Gunn, University of London. I want to just challenge many of the theorists on ways of talking about democracy. I think real-world democracy, broadly speaking, it's a problem-solving mechanism. I think people largely approach it as a problem-solving mechanism. The reason it's so complicated now is that for decades people approached it as a problem-solving mechanism. People have used their votes to solve problems, to express their preference for different candidates offering different solutions for how these problems might be solved. It may simply be the case that these problems are so complicated that the state has grown in response to them, grown to try to deal with them. Going back to Hélène's point, that this isn't really democracy, I challenge that; it is democratic, people approach it in that way, the state is largely responsive to their views. The difficulty is knowing how to solve these problems, they're very dynamic, they're very complicated.

That goes back to the deliberative democracy point, there's a big, big question here, which is, how would we know how to approach these questions, how do you know, even in an ideal democratic setting, how would we know what information to give the voters, how they should deliberate about it, and what a good outcome would look like? I think that's the problem we have now. The problem doesn't just go away if we idealize the democratic conditions.

Landemore: Paul, on the idea that democracy is about solving problems, that it's very difficult to know what they are, maybe you're right, but I would just point out that when you have a system where Congress has a 9 percent rate of approval, something abysmal like that, and hasn't been here since 30 percent since the '70s and at the same time the turnover rate is something like 10 percent, to me it's a strong signal that the decision making at the top is not inclusive enough. According to the liberal theories I use, it's probably not performing very well. So that's one way to get at it.

Then the question of tradeoffs, Jim put it that way, how much diversity does democracy require or tolerate? It depends what kind of diversity we're talking about. In the book I distinguish, very simplistically I guess, between cognitive diversity and value diversity. I said, look, cognitive diversity is great; as for value diversity, as far it's about fundamental value diversity, it's bad, because we're not even trying to solve the same problem, so all the epistemic qualities go out the window. That's because I'm trying to put together a simple model in the book. But in fact the two are not easy to dissociate, it's likely that they're correlated, that's why we need Republicans because they just see the world differently. So value diversity is actually harming us in some way, but also enhancing it in some way, because they actually see democracy differently. And that's where I think you need to start doing, I'm not sure I want to call it empirical, but push the model farther and inject some value diversity into the model and see how far it can go while retaining the epistemic properties, and maybe it would just hang by a thread, and maybe that's why when we elect somebody elected by 51 percent of the vote, you don't get 95 percent because of all the conflict between value and cognitive diversity, but we still get enough of an epistemic performance to make the system work over time. So that's a distinction I wanted to make.

And then the tradeoffs between epistemic considerations and others, when we vote, as I understood the question at least, yes, Daniel is absolutely right—and maybe I should've said that again—my book is really about one slice of the case for democracy, the epistemic case. I'm not denying that there are procedural arguments for it that are very important and that we may have to face tradeoffs between procedural considerations and epistemic ones. I think when we vote we do both: we express a strong fundamental value preference for, say, equality over, maybe, a free market preference or something like that. At the same time we pass a judgment about what we think would work best for the country at that point in time. So I don't really have a good answer about how you handle the tradeoff, I just acknowledge it.

Viehoff: I'll say very quickly, I think value diversity and epistemic diversity are really important, that's just the final point that Hélène talked about, partly in response to Jim. But I think it's important to recognize two quite different relations: On the one hand, there's the question, whether value diversity affects epistemic diversity in a variety ways that might be beneficial. But it seems to me a much deeper question is, if there's value diversity, what is meant to be the normative significance of any decision we in fact reach. Here is one way to think about this: If you think of epistemic diversity, the logic of the Page-Hong model is to say, 'Look, we might all disagree ex ante, but in the end we can actually agree on what the correct institutions are, because while we all have different cognitive endowments at different stages, we actually agree on the actual ranking of the values.' So we harness epistemic diversity to ultimately overcome our disagreement. And now the fundamental challenge to the model, and to the general way of thinking about democracy that this model suggests, asks, 'What happens when we don't share the framework for ranking solutions?' But then, even if you think that cognitive diversity

can sometimes be beneficial, you ought to worry that such diversity won't be beneficial when it runs so deep that we don't even share a ranking of solutions. And that's just what much of our fundamental normative disagreement looks like. So if we want to solve the second problem of value diversity – why to abide by democratic decisions with which we disagree – we may have to refer to some quite different explanation. That explanation might appeal to the value of our ruling ourselves, or perhaps to the importance of procedural equality. But it won't appeal to epistemic considerations.

Fishkin: can I make a shameless announcement on behalf of Hélène Landemore? She will be given the Spitz prize for the best book for the year; the event place will take place here, Parc 55. Given the value diversity in this room, we can continue the discussion on epistemic outcomes.

Landemore: Thank you.

Viehoff: Thank you all.

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