

**REALISING THE THEORY:
A HISTORY OF DEMOCRATIC THOUGHT AND
HISTORIOGRAPHICAL NEGLECT**

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**A THESIS SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
AT THE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY**

AUGUST 1998

DECLARATION

**I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own independent research,
and all authorities and sources that have been used are duly acknowledged.**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'T. Clarke', with a large, sweeping flourish on the left side.

Thomas E. Clarke

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

*"I enjoy democracy immensely.
It is incomparably idiotic, and hence incomparably amusing" (Mencken 1927: 223).*

While a thesis may be the work of one person, I could not have written this thesis without the help of many people. Thanks must go firstly to those that have been there for the entire duration, in particular, my supervisors Dr David West, and Professor Barry Hindess, and all of my family. This thesis would neither have begun nor ended without you. While I began this thesis as one person, I ended it another. For those that were there at the beginning, in particular Dr John Ballard and Jenny Anderson, I thank you. Along the way, many people, in their own ways, gave me support when it was needed, including: Professor Brian Galligan, Dr Gwyn Singleton, all of the 'crowd' at the Department of Political Science (Faculties), the Federalism Research Centre, the Political Science Program at the Australian National University, the entire Lovett family, Ms Kate Gowland and Dr Andre Moore. If I have forgotten to identify contributors by name, rest assured you are not any less appreciated. Thanks must also go to the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs and to all my work colleagues there, for their generosity and support, without which it is doubtful this thesis would ever have been completed. Finally, I cannot thank highly enough my fiancée, Dr Siwan Lovett. No-one provided me with more energy, critical input and support than Siwan. It gives me great joy to say that the strengths of this thesis are all a tribute to you, its weaknesses are entirely of my own making.

ABSTRACT

This thesis seeks to rectify an area of neglect in the historiography of democratic theory. Democratic theory requires four elements in order to be given the title. Firstly, it must *define* democracy; to tell us what ‘democracy’ means. Secondly, it must *justify* democracy; to tell us why it is a ‘good thing’. Thirdly, it must tell us how democracy will be *achieved*, if it has not already been achieved. Fourthly, it must tell us how the conditions for the survival of democracy will be created and replicated; that is, it must tell us about the *realisation* of democracy.

The core proposition of this thesis is that the historiography of democratic theory tends to dwell on the definition and justification of democracy in democratic theory, at the expense of the theoretical dimensions of democracy’s achievement and realisation. This thesis focuses on the latter, by presenting a history and analysis of the idea of the realisation of democracy in the various schools of democratic theory. As such, this thesis is best viewed as an analysis of, and adjunct to, the existing histories of democratic theory, rather than a complete history in its own right.

Ancient Greek theorists, republicans, liberals, socialists and postmodernists approach the realisation of democracy through variations on a theme of restraint. While each school is quite distinctive, there is a surprising overlap and cross-fertilisation between them when it comes to the issue of democracy’s realisation. This reinforces the need for democratic theorists, of all persuasions, as well as historians of democratic theory to bear in mind democracy’s historicity, and to recognise the theoretical importance of its realisation.

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis is about the history of an idea. The idea is the realisation of democracy. Democracy has been a staple area of academic interest for hundreds of years. For most of that time western polities have not been democratic, and the very idea of democracy was not regarded as a 'good thing', but as something distasteful, or downright dangerous. The growing acceptance of the rule by the people since the seventeenth century has usually been realised against a backdrop of resistance from those holding power, both politically and intellectually. Only recently has it become the norm for intellectuals to favour democracy over other forms of political organisation.

A core assumption of this thesis is that the idea of realising democracy can be found in 'democratic theory'. 'Democratic theory' is used in this thesis to mean something much more than the postwar literature that has laid claim to the title; it encompasses hundreds of years of political enquiry, the origins of which are located two and a half thousand years ago in anti-democratic thought of the Ancient Greeks. In principle, 'democratic theory' arises whenever a theorist discusses democracy, in the same way as moral or economic theory arises when a theorist discusses issues of morality or political economy. What matters, therefore, is what is theorised, not what it is called.

A passing reference to democracy, however, does not democratic theory make. If it did, it would mean that the history of democratic theory is virtually a *de facto* history of political thought, as most political theorists, at one stage or another, mention democracy in their work. 'Democratic theory' is therefore treated in this thesis as a subset of political theory. Similarly, the *history* of democratic theory is treated as a subset of the *history* of political theory.

For the purposes of this thesis, 'democratic theory' requires a number of elements in order to be given the title. It must tell us what 'democracy' means, why it is a 'good thing', how it will be achieved (if it has not already been achieved), and importantly, how the conditions for the survival of democracy will be created and replicated. The last element is what I term 'realisation'. To realise genuinely something of value, it is not enough merely to achieve it momentarily; it has to have longevity. It is this element that is prominent in historical sources of democratic theory, but is neglected in its recent historiography. This thesis seeks to rectify this historiographical neglect by presenting a history and analysis of the idea of the realisation of democracy.

Democratic theory has all the hallmarks of an excellent field for historical inquiry. There is a large and lively set of sources stretching back over two and half thousand years. There are profound political and philosophical questions that can be addressed, and there is an abiding popular and academic interest in all things 'democratic'. In other words, the material is good in itself, it has intellectual credibility, and it is marketable. This has proved a recipe for recent publishing success for historians of democratic theory.

The publishing success of the historiography of democratic theory reflects the abiding interest in it, but belies its weaknesses. These weaknesses arise, I believe, from the historians' intellectual context. This context, namely, Anglo-American Political Science, tends to demand that political theory, and its histories, take a particular form and have a particular purpose. These resolve themselves in the historiography of democratic theory in two ways. Firstly, there is a tendency for the histories to be structured as if 'democracy' were a usefully unifying device in what are really histories of various schools of political thought. Democratic theory ceases to be subsidiary to political theory. This results in a tendency to make artificially sharp divisions between 'schools' of democratic thought, when deeper analysis reveals that the common thread of democracy blurs rather than

sharpens the differences between individual theorists. Structure alone, however, does not explain the problem that this thesis seeks to address.

The historiography of democratic theory reflects its origins in the discipline of Political Science in a second, more problematic way. The literature reflects an assumption that 'high' political theory is about definitions and norms, and not about political institutions and practices. The former approach is all very well if one is writing a comparative history of 'high' political theory, but when applied to the history of democratic theory, the results are disappointing.

Definitions and norms are only two of the elements that comprise democratic theory. 'Democratic theory' as it is used in this thesis, also needs to tell the reader how democracy will be achieved and realised over time. The historiography of democratic theory neglects these two issues. This thesis does not pretend to rectify both areas of neglect as this would be too large an undertaking. My interest is on the techniques for ensuring democracy's permanence, that is, the issue of realisation. The literature on instituting or achieving democracy will only be touched upon to the extent that it overlaps with our discussion of its realisation.

Why write a history of the idea of realising democracy?

This thesis looks at the issue of realisation in democratic theory and traces its development and change through the history of democratic theories. There are good reasons why this should be done. Contributing in some way to give greater completeness to an historical literature is, I believe, an important task in itself. Not only does it provide fresh insight into a topic, it reminds us of the contingent nature of the writing of history. The examination of histories tells us a lot about the historian's condition and, therefore, about the effects of our own condition on what we write. In the case of democratic theory, an examination of the histories and of the theories about which they write shows us that there is a need for regular re-writing.

Re-examining the history of democratic theory with a focus on how the theories were to be realised is important not only as a contribution to the historical literature on democratic theory, but also as an aid to making sense of democratic theory in the present. In writing a history of realisation in democratic theory, the origins of ideas currently in vogue become clear, as are alternatives that have been used in the past. There also emerges something of a paradox lurking within the history of democratic theory. This is exposed only when we focus on the issue of the realisation of these theories. This paradox goes to the heart of democratic theory itself and its histories. The paradox is this: democracy was realised prior to its theorisation and, therefore, democracy does not need to be theorised in order to be realised; yet democratic theory tends to presuppose the priority of theory over realisation. This paradox contains a lesson for both democratic theorists and historians of democratic theory that must be addressed if the literature is to move beyond its current rather ossified state.

Thesis Structure

The structure of the historiographical literature on democratic theory does not explain its neglect of the issue of realisation. Indeed this thesis adopts the most popular structure, namely the 'schools of thought' approach, to address this problem. The approach used in this thesis is to delve quite deeply into the writings of a few key theorists who are seen by the historians of democratic theory as exemplars of their particular school of democratic thought. The issue of realisation of democracy is drawn out from these writings, and situated in the broader context of the issue of realisation in the school to which they are seen as belonging. In this way, this thesis can be read as an adjunct to other historiographical works on democratic theory, rather than as a complete history in itself. One thing that emerges from this approach is that the notion of quite separate 'schools of thought' can mask commonalities between them. This leads us to expect other commonalities that simply are not there. On the other hand,

there also emerges a problematic tendency in some recent democratic theories whereby the language of the past is appropriated and used for incompatible ends. We see this most strongly in the way in which aspects of ‘republican’ democratic theory are used by some recent theorists, without an apparent understanding of the theoretical assumptions intrinsic to these notions.

This thesis consists of an introduction, six chapters and a conclusion. Chapter One presents an overview of the historiography of democratic theory. Its purpose is to outline the way in which the histories of democratic theory have been written, both in terms of their structure and intellectual context. From this we arrive at some possible reasons why the literature neglects the issue of realisation in democratic theory. We see that this neglect may be best explained not as an accident or merely a result of inevitable constraints upon space, but as a product, whether conscious or not, of the historians’ intellectual contexts and the impact these have on what they consider to be the purpose of their writings.

Subsequent chapters in this thesis are structured to pick up on the main schools of thought identified in the histories of democratic theory. Each chapter briefly summarises how the historians of democratic theory have written about each school of democratic thought, before offering a detailed account of how the historical authors theorised the realisation of their notion of democracy. These accounts uncover subtleties, commonalities and differences not discussed in the historiographical literature.

It is arguable whether democracy itself may or may not have begun with the Ancient Greeks, but democratic theory certainly owes its origins to them. The Greeks did not bequeath to us a theory of democracy, rather, their legacy lies in inventing the term itself, and in recording the democratic ideals that later democratic theorists were to take up. Chapter Two provides an account of Greek writings on democracy, from a perspective that notes that democracy was realised in a hostile theoretical climate. The later priority given to democratic theory over

practice is at odds with democracy's a-theoretical origins. The problem for the Ancient critics of democracy is that, in realising democracy, the Greeks undermined the preconditions that were thought to be essential to a virtuous life. Democracy's theoretical failings were as much ethical as political in origin. We find in the historical sources, particularly Aristotle and Plato, that issues of politics cannot be divorced from ethical considerations on proper, virtuous, public life. Ethical behaviour is found to be realised through the citizens' individual self-control of their actions. If realised democracy undermines the preconditions thought essential for virtue, then democracy is itself an undesirable system of government.

In Chapter Three we turn to the Renaissance revival of interest in the idea and practice of democracy, which spawned a theoretical perspective that could loosely be termed 'republican'. From considerations on whether 'republicanism' can be said to be a separate strand of democratic theory, we turn to the ways in which republican authors conceive the realisation of their theories. The example of Jean-Jacques Rousseau demonstrates that while republicans borrow heavily on Ancient notions of the construction of virtue to theorise how democracy may be realised, they do so for modern reasons. This leads republicans to significantly different outcomes from their Ancient predecessors. Our discussion of republican democratic theory concludes with some reflections on contemporary 'republicanism', dwelling in particular on whether these 'republicans' give full consideration to the theoretical underpinnings of the theory of civic virtue.

Chapter Four leads us into the vast literature of liberal democratic theory. Our interest lies neither directly in the 'realist' literature on political behaviour in liberal democratic polities, such as voting theory and the like, nor the literature on 'democratisation' in the Third World. Both of these literatures stem from liberal democratic sources and will, insofar as they are consistent with liberal democratic theory, be treated as such. Where there are significant departures from the liberal

democratic model, these are examined in isolation. The primary focus of the chapter is on those theories that seek to articulate a vision of what liberal democracy *should be* like, not what they think liberal democracy *is* like. The works of James Mill and his son John Stuart Mill give us prototypical examples of two competing tendencies in liberal democratic thought, namely, ‘protective’ and ‘developmental’ liberal democratic theory. While often quite distinct, both tendencies share assumptions about democracy being realised through containment. In liberal democratic theory, democracy is realised through its containment to the status of a mediating device between community and government. Government has an elevated and problematic place in liberal democratic theory, and performs technical functions such as guiding and legislating for the community. Even where government is thought to have a function in developing the democratic capacities of the community, citizens are seen as subjects of the government’s actions, not as constituent of government itself. In liberal democratic theory, therefore, democracy can only be realised when government and the citizenry are institutionally protected from each other. Liberal democratic institutions, such as the representative system, provide the mechanisms by which that protection arises, and thus they ensure that liberal democracy is realised.

Chapter Five rounds out our survey of the major schools of democratic theory by examining the ways in which socialist democratic theory addresses the issue of democracy’s realisation. Socialists want to break down the liberal democratic containment of democracy. The works of Karl Marx on democracy are examined in some detail. There is also a brief survey of the distinctive features of social democratic, ‘Eurocommunist’, ‘participatory’ and ‘discursive’ socialist theories of democracy in relation to the issue of democracy’s realisation. One of the things that separates socialist theories of democracy from one another is the relative priority given to the realisation of democracy, and to the realisation of socialism. We find that those theorists who give higher relative priority to the realisation of

socialism can defer theorising the realisation of democracy and, thereby, ‘define away’ the ‘problem’ of democracy’s realisation. Conversely, those who give democracy a high relative value encounter more problems in plausibly theorising the realisation of democracy.

Chapters Three, Four and Five set out the issue of democracy’s realisation in the major schools of democratic theory. In Chapter Six we turn to the issue of the urge to theorise the realisation of democracy, and the nexus between the realisation of democracy in democratic theory, and the realisation of democracy in practice. These issues are examined through the postmodern and/or relativist works of Paul Feyerabend, Richard Rorty, Chantal Mouffe and John Keane. In attempting to cut democratic theory adrift from the search for a pure realised democratic ‘form’ these authors unconsciously return the debate to the position noted in Chapter Two, and raise serious questions about the purpose of democratic theory itself and the position of the democratic theorist.

CHAPTER ONE

The Histories of Democratic Theory

This short chapter outlines the historiography of democratic theory, emphasising the way in which the histories of democratic theory have tended to be written. A core proposition is that the historiography of democratic theory has neglected an important element of the historical source material, namely, the way in which democratic theorists theorised the realisation of their theories. The focus in the historiographical literature, instead, has been on the meaning and value given to ‘democracy’ in the historical source material.

In this chapter I suggest that there are a number of explanations for this neglect, ranging from simple expediency to the intellectual context of the historians of democratic theory and their audience. The latter can best be characterised narrowly as that of ‘normative’ Political Science, rather than the broader history of ideas. Detailed analysis of the reasons for the neglect, however, would be the object of another thesis in itself. As has already been explained, the purpose of this thesis is to rectify this neglect by re-examining the history of democratic thought, with a focus on the issue of realisation in the historical material.

In outlining the historiography of democratic theory, I focus on three things. Firstly, I will briefly consider the history of the historiography of democratic theory: when and where it has been written, and by whom. Secondly, the structure of the historiographical literature will be outlined. The methodology adopted will be examined, as will the general focus of interest in terms of the content of the democratic theories that they discuss. We will find that the historiographical literature tends to dwell on the issues of description and justification of democracy in the historical source material, rather than on other

important aspects such as how the original theorists believed democracy would be realised. Each of the subsequent chapters of this thesis presents an analysis of how the historiographical literature deals with specific democratic theorists and schools of democratic thought as context for a more complete understanding of the material. Finally, this chapter sketches briefly some possible reasons why the historiographical literature neglects the issue of realisation in the source material. This enables us to reflect on the contingent nature of both the historian and his or her subject matter. The latter is an important point that we will return to toward the end of this thesis.

The historiographical literature

Somewhere around the Library of Congress classification JC 421 - JC 423 in any university library one will find shelves of texts on democracy and democratic theory. Most of these are self-conscious contributions to one or another aspect of democratic theory. Many, however, are quite different. Rather than being contributions to democratic theory, they are texts *about* democratic theory, how it has developed, where it comes from, what it means and the like. They are, by necessity, histories of democratic theory. The degree to which this historical dimension is acknowledged varies from text to text, but none avoids it entirely.

While diverse in content, the histories of democratic theory fall into a number of basic 'types', and present a generally consistent picture of the development of democratic theory. These are scholarly works, written by scholars for other scholars, or their students. The themes identified and carried through these works would be familiar to any political theorist, and include the concepts of liberty, equality, participation, representation, public/private, the relationship between the State, community and individual, and rights/responsibilities.

The history of the histories of democratic theory is brief. Prior to the advent of this literature, primarily in the post-war era, works on democracy tended to be

exclusively works within the genre of democratic theory rather than works *about* democratic theory. Democracy was written about either in terms of contemporary political institutions or as a problematic political theory. In fact, democracy in general could never have been said to have been a topic that consistently excited academic interest, and when it did, it was rarely positive (Macpherson 1972: 1). As a consequence there was little published on the history of the idea of democracy that presented or claimed to present an even-handed overview of the subject.

Although academic interest in the history of democratic theory has its origins in the inter-war period, it did not fully flower until after the Second World War. Most pre-war texts focus on a program of ‘making the world safe for democracy’¹ rather than the history of the democratic idea. Thus, in his path-breaking work, *A Short History of Democracy*, Hattersley notes that the available literature on democratic theory was “mainly concerned with the nature of democracy, and its application to modern conditions” and did “not attempt to give a historical narrative” (Hattersley 1930: 258). Hattersley’s contemporary texts, including Joseph Schumpeter’s influential *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*,² were primarily arguments in favour of democratic government set against a contemporary background of Fascism and State-Socialism.³

The writing of an ‘historical narrative’ of democracy has, however, proved a fruitful sphere of Anglo-American academic activity in the post-war years.⁴ The

¹ Or sometimes, in perhaps an unconscious homage to the ancient philosophical standpoint: making the world safe *from* democracy. See for example: Mencken (1927) and De Madriaga (1937).

² Schumpeter (1976)- first published in 1942.

³ See also: Brown (1920) Smith (1926), Delisle Burns (1935).

⁴ Examples of the historiographical literature on democratic theory include: Arblaster (1987), Beetham (1994), Berry (1989), Brown (1920), Cohen (1971), Copp et al (1993), Dahl (1956), Delisle Burns (1935), Dondero (1973), Duncan (1983), Dunn (1992), Finley (1985), Green

tendency to academicise the study of prevailing democratic political institutions⁵ was augmented with the application of an historical attitude to this academic activity. The historiography of democratic theory was one product of this activity.

The historiography of democratic theory is largely an Anglo-American phenomenon. Works of this genre that have been translated into English (a good indicator of non Anglo-American source) can be counted on one hand.⁶ This stands in contrast to the 'multicultural' nature of democratic theory itself. Many, if not most, pre-war works of democratic theory are non Anglo-American in origin. In the post-war era, however, works on democratic theory have been predominantly American in origin. In other words, the rise of the historiography of democratic theory is in line with the rise of a dominant Anglo-American academic interest in democracy itself.

Structure and methodology of the historiographical literature

The way one presents an argument affects not only how the reader understands the material; it also places constraints on what can be presented in the first place. Content, to a certain extent at least, follows form. 'Form' in this context means the authorship of the material, how each contribution is treated relative to the whole work, and the arrangement of argument in the whole work, as well as the source material that supports it. Each of these has some potential impact on the likely content of the historiographical literature, but it is not, of itself, sufficient to explain its limitations.

(1993), Hallowell (1954), Hattersley (1930), Held (1987 and 1993), Lipson (1964), Lord Percy of Newcastle (1954), Macpherson (1972 and 1973), Mayo (1960), Muhlberger & Paine (1993), Sartori (1965).

⁵ See: Ricci (1984).

⁶ Sartori (1965) is the outstanding example.

The authorship of the histories of democratic theory is limited to three main types: the ‘primer’; the single author work; and, the edited collection. Firstly, a few texts take the form of a ‘primer’ in democratic theory. With little editorial comment, what is presented is a collection of selected, edited, primary works by historically significant theorists (and critics) of democracy.⁷ Whereas most of the other texts are either single-author works unified by an underlying argument toward a preferred model of democratic theory, or multiple-author collections addressing one or a number of themes, this first type of history of democratic theory adopts the loosest, most scattered approach to the material. If there is a unifying theme at all, it is the *ideas* of democracy as they are re-interpreted by successive historical figures. Typically these collections of ‘essential’ writings are arranged in an historically unilinear and unidirectional manner. The implication is, by structure if not by argument, that all of the theorists included participated in a single historical dialogue about the nature of democracy, and that each built successively on preceding arguments. Even if the concept of democracy is seen as “essentially contested” (Green 1993: 2-18), there is an inevitable tendency to ‘whiggishness’ in this approach to the literature. The most recent theories must be the ‘best’, simply because they are a distillation of all that has gone before. The past inevitably leads to the present and, importantly, the past can be read from the present, without any attempt to place it in its context.

The majority of the literature takes the forms of the ‘traditional’ single author academic text.⁸ The strength of these works comes from their internal coherence. They are pieces of continuous prose, with a consistent line of argument and, usually, a quite explicit ‘barrow to push’ in terms of a preferred model of

⁷ See for example: Green (1993), and Rejai (1967).

⁸ See for example: Arblaster (1987), Berry (1989), Brown (1920), Cohen (1971), Finley (1985), Hallowell (1954), Hattersley (1930), Held (1987 & 1993), Lipson (1964), Macpherson (1972 & 1973), Mayo (1960), Pennock (1979), and Phillips (1991).

democratic theory. While littered with obscure works and forgotten authors, this is the field of the major figures of the literature- among them C.B. Macpherson, Giovanni Sartori, Robert Dahl, and David Held.

An increasingly popular form of academic publishing, the edited collection of essays by a range of authors, forms the third major 'type' of history of democratic theory.⁹ Clearly, there is a risk that as a text's authorship is multiplied, the internal coherence of the text as a whole can suffer. As we will see in subsequent chapters, the component parts may well be valuable and worthy documents in their own right, but the question remains: is there sufficient overlap with other parts of the whole to give a reader a sense of a *completeness* in the work?

The content of the historiographical literature is arranged in two ways: either thematically, or in terms of schools of thought. The former kind, which is comparatively infrequent, is usually restricted to texts with a limited historical focus and an alignment with the self-proclaimed 'realist' school of democratic theory.¹⁰ Themes such as liberty, equality and representation are discussed. There is, however, a tendency to adopt uncritically concepts used by different authors at different times. The primary interest of the 'realist' school, which stems from Schumpeter's work (1976), is in competitive elite and voting studies, in other words, the operations of contemporary democratic systems. As a consequence, these works are of only minimal value to this thesis, and will only be discussed to the extent to which they examine the preconditions for a functioning liberal democracy.

⁹ It is hard to find many works of this type in the field of the history of democratic theory that pre-date 1980. Since then, however, there have been a number of publications of this type: Beetham (1994), Churchill (1994), Copp et al. (1993), Day et al. (1988), Duncan (1983), Dunn (1992), and Held (1993). Kelso (1970) is an earlier example.

¹⁰ See for example: Brown (1920), Cavala (1976), Cohen (1971), Hallowell (1954), Lipson (1964), Mayo (1960), Pennock (1979) and Sartori (1965). Other commentators use terms such as "revisionists" (Nelson 1980), "contemporary theorists" (Pateman 1970), "empirical theorists" (Skinner 1973), "competitive elite" and "pluralist" (Held 1987). Kirkpatrick (1981) presents a useful summary of the focus and values of the 'realist' school.

The latter arrangement of the content of the historiographical literature, that is, by schools of thought, aligns the theoretical material in clusters around three or four identifiably independent general schools of political theory.¹¹ These are then arranged in chronological order of their inception, but often run parallel to one another. This approach is the one that is used in this thesis, as it offers the greatest scope for examining the wider context within which historical theorists were situated, as well as providing a means of highlighting the importance of the differences these contextual relationships create.

We have seen, then, that there are two principal ways of authoring the histories of democratic theory, firstly, single author, and secondly multiple author edited collections. We have also identified two methodologies for organising the material, firstly thematically, and secondly in terms of schools of thought. The structure and methodology of the histories of democratic theory would be of marginal interest to this thesis, if it weren't for the fact that they reflect very clear assumptions about the source material. There is an apparently fundamental choice offered by the literature: either you accept that democracy has some immutable time-transcending meaning, or you deny that there can ever be any complete agreement about its meaning. Generally speaking, the more polemical a work (which is most likely to be written by a single author), the more likely it is to offer the former line of argument.¹² Conversely, the majority of the texts are more 'academic' in tone, and tend to plump for the 'comparativist' approach. This is most obvious in the multiple author works, which is hardly surprising, given that is unlikely that a group of academics would agree completely on the meaning of an idea as contentious as democracy.

¹¹ See for example: Arblaster (1987), Dunn (1992), Hattersley (1930), Held (1987), Macpherson (1972), Pennock (1979: 121-160), and Rejai (1967): 124-161.

¹² See for example: Barry (1989), Brown (1920), Cohen (1971), Delisle Burns (1935), Hattersley (1930), Lipson (1964), Lord Percy of Newcastle (1954), Mayo (1960), Sartori (1965), and Smith (1926),

One of the apparent parallels with the limited range of methodological types in the historiographical literature on democratic theory is the limited approach to the material itself. Most of the literature, be it polemical or comparativist, appears to be engaged in debates larger than just the history of the idea of democracy. The subject matter is not just democracy and democratic theory, but democracy's place in political theory. The literature is structured to draw the reader's attention to the linkages between the grand theoretical narratives and debates running through and between the historical authors. Democracy sometimes appears to be merely a device to link the discussion of grand theory. In this context, more detailed aspects of an individual theorist's thought, if they are not easily transferred into the meta-argument about the development of political theory, simply will not be included. This helps to explain the certain superficiality that is found in parts of the literature, and may shed some light on why certain aspects of the historical source material are neglected.

In writing the history of democratic theory as if it were the history of political theory in general, the historiographical literature focuses on two main issues: the definitions and the justifications of democracy in the historical source material. This is not inappropriate in itself, but it reflects the nature of the scholastic environment in which the historiographical literature was penned, an environment that neglects the issue of realisation of democracy in the historical source material. Subsequent chapters of this thesis will demonstrate the extent of this neglect by comparing the historiographical literature's account of particular schools of democratic theory with a fuller reading of what the theorists themselves had to say.

Definition and justification are but two of a number of constant concerns in the historical source material. The other major one is the issue of realisability. It is entirely reasonable that the historiographical literature spends time trying to ascertain what the historical theorists meant by 'democracy'. It is also quite

reasonable to expect that the reasons why these theorists thought democracy was a good idea should be explored in detail. What is less clear is why there is no consistent attempt to provide a concurrent and equally detailed account of how the historical theorists theorised the realisation of their theories.

Why is the realisation of democracy neglected?

That the historiographical literature on democratic theory dwells on the issues of definition and justification at the expense of realisation will emerge in our examination of the historical literature in subsequent chapters of this thesis. The purpose of this section is not to answer conclusively why they do this, but to offer some possible explanations for it. This gives us food for thought in considering the contingent nature of historiography, and proves useful in thinking through the ramifications of 'postmodernism' for democratic theory and its historiography towards the end of this thesis.

There are a number of possible explanations for the neglect by a literature of an important aspect of its subject matter. At the extreme, one could mount an explanation based either on a mere misfortune in the reading of the historical record or a deliberate distortion of it. A more measured explanation may look to the context in which the historiography of democratic theory has been produced. This yields explanations ranging from a simple institutional blindness to the issue of realisation, to a stronger position that suggests that realisation has been excluded deliberately because it has been considered not to be within the purview of the literature.

It is hard to give credence to an explanation for the neglect of realisation in the history of democratic theory that relies either on mere accident or intellectual malice. It could be argued that in a literature that covers such a wide range of topics, it is unreasonable to expect anything other than a superficial gloss over the subject matter. This 'expediency' argument is flawed on a number of grounds. It

implies that the literature *as a whole*, is superficial. Certainly the literature is derivative, and must necessarily summarise complex material, but superficiality is too strong a charge. There is a substance, coherence and history to the literature that does not suggest lightness of purpose. The argument also implies that in such a literature some things must necessarily be omitted. This is certainly true; however, it does not explain why the *same thing* is consistently omitted. In the search for a 'new angle' on an old topic, one would expect that most avenues of enquiry would have been explored, even if one did not agree with the account of that exploration. Yet this is not the case.

Instead of merely being an omission caused by an overwhelming literature or perpetrated by malicious intellectuals, the neglect of a discussion of the issue of realisation in democratic theory may be explained by other reasons. It is argued below that there are two quite plausible explanations for the neglect of the issue of realisation in democratic theory: that the structure of the historiographical literature somehow limits the content to a specific range; and/or that there are socio-political reasons why the historians of democratic theory approach their material in the way that they have done. These explanations could either operate independently of each other, or in fact, be mutually reinforcing.

As we have seen, the most common methodological approach to the history of democratic theory, whether by one or many authors, is a 'comparativist' one. A comparativist approach appears a natural enough stance to take, when dealing with a large literature containing mutually exclusive, absolutist theories of democracy. That is, it is natural enough if the author is not intent on convincing the reader that there is one 'true' form of democracy. This is in contrast, however, with the theoretical source material, namely those democratic theorists who believed strongly that there is only one 'true' or 'best' meaning of democracy, namely theirs.

Does comparativism itself explain why the historians tend to neglect the issue of realisation in democratic theory? In itself it does not, as the comparative structure of this thesis demonstrates. Comparativism might, however, lead an author to neglect one aspect of his or her subject if it were not easily compared with other aspects of it. This is particularly the case if there is a component that is so dominant that its interests tend to become the interests that link the whole story. For example, could the relative indifference of liberal democratic theory to the issue of realisation mean that what tend to be compared are those issues about which liberal democrats have the greatest concern? This could only be the case if liberalism is such a dominant theory, which is possible, and that the historians have, consciously or not, decided *en masse* to write histories of democratic theory from a perspective driven by this dominance.

Most of the histories of democratic theory are not so crude as to adopt this approach explicitly. Indeed, it is those texts that adopt a thematic rather than comparativist approach that do so, almost exclusively, from the position of liberal democracy. The central concerns of liberalism, the state, the individual, liberty, and rights, form the key themes, through which a democratic thread is drawn. Yet as we will see, liberalism does not require democracy, although it may adopt it. The liberal 'lens' of this literature is highlighted by its inability to treat non-liberal versions of the democratic idea, as anything other than oddities, or threats.¹³ Thus the subject matter of this literature could hardly be said to be democracy, but rather one theory's view of it.¹⁴

¹³ See for example: Sartori (1965), Delisle Burns (1935), Hattersley (1930), Brown (1920), Smith (1926), and Lord Percy of Newcastle (1954).

¹⁴ I am not suggesting that the authors could have abstracted themselves from the reality of their positions in liberal democracies to some completely neutral standpoint, as this is plainly impossible. There is, however, a world of difference between presenting an analysis of a literature and writing a partisan tract. I would suggest that many of these works fall into that latter category.

The influence of liberalism can plausibly be extended to include those historians of democratic theory who do not explicitly use liberal democracy as the pole around which to organise their material. The success of liberalism in the mid-late twentieth century must have had an impact on a literature almost exclusively from that period. Historians of democratic theory could have been desensitised to the issue of realisation in democratic theory, because they and their audience live in societies in which democracy (of a sort) has already been realised. Thus, liberal democracy, both in practice and in its theorisation, can dominate a literature without explicitly ordering its content.

In examining the definition and justification for democracy the comparativist historians can be seen as at once separating themselves from liberal democratic theory, but being influenced by liberal democracy's practical success. What complicates matters, is the tendency among many comparativist historians to slip from an approach that tells a comparative story of democratic theory into prescriptivism, in which the author(s) tell the reader which theory(ies) is, or are, best or worst, and which we may wish to consider in future developments of democratic societies.¹⁵ This requires a set of standards by which to judge the merit of various aspects of the historical material. These standards are often not well articulated in the literature.

How is it possible that the apparently neutral comparativist approach slides into a prescriptivist outcome, and is it a problem? The answer to the first question lies in an apparent slippage in the historians' understanding of the 'real' subject matter of their histories. This subject matter is ostensibly the history of the democratic idea. However, on reading through the arguments, one is struck by the sense that democracy *per se* is not the primary subject at all. The majority of

¹⁵ See: Arblaster (1987: 99-105), Duncan (1983), Hattersley (1930: 236-252), Held (1987 & 1993), Macpherson (1972: 56-67) and Phillips (1991: 162-165). See also: Cohen (1971: 277-288), Lipson (1964: 569-594) and Mayo (1960: 279-310).

the literature, in particular that structured around the major schools of political thought, seems to be more about *those schools* than democracy itself. In this sense these publications are texts on the history of political theory, with democracy as a kind of unifying theme. This could explain why, for example, so much ink is spilt on the structure and rationale behind the works of, say, Hobbes, when his claim to a place in the democratic pantheon would not appear to be strong. Similarly, the figure of Marx is important in the history of the democratic idea, but do we really need to know all that much about the materialist theory of historical change?

Does the slide into prescriptivism result from confusion over the purpose of the histories? By presenting their proposals as, say, improvements for a ‘cybernetic’ age, these historians of democratic theory are adopting a complex stance toward their medium. They appear to be writing neither positivist history, the collection of facts that show “how it really was” as Ranke demanded in the 1830s, nor histories affected by the paralysing belief that history itself is a completely contingent exercise.¹⁶ Instead, what they appear to be writing is something more akin to the moral history that so offended Ranke in the first place. Their history has a purpose, which is to be the theoretical precedent on which to ground their preferred future models of democracy.

Does it matter if the comparativist-prescriptivist slippage takes place? It does if the theoretical precedent is not, in reality, as supportive as is assumed in the literature. Many of the prescriptivist historians of democratic theory would be uncomfortable either with what the historical democratic theorists had to say on the matter of realising their theories, or what could reasonably be assumed were the assumptions underpinning their arguments. These are far less *laissez-faire* than most historians would wish to endorse in their contemporary models. They

¹⁶ See: Carr (1987).

are also, I would submit, intrinsically bound to the democratic theorists' considerations on the justification of democracy.

So there are explanations for the neglect of realisation in democratic theory both in the dominance of liberalism and/or the prescriptivist tendencies of many of the historians. What this points to is the peculiar kind of history this really is. It is *political* history, both in the obvious sense of being about political theories, but also in the sense of its intellectual location. It is not located in philosophy or the history of ideas, but lies firmly in the theoretical arm of the discipline of Political Science. While it has both philosophical and historical elements, its purpose is primarily political, in both the specialist sense of the academic discipline and the general sense of politics as exercise in power. It is influenced by the terms in which Political Science, as a discipline, operates.

Political Science is a discipline that, according to Ricci, demands a certain justificatory purpose of theoretical writings. This reflects the split in Political Science between those 'normative' theorists, who tell us how the political world *should be* and the 'descriptive' political scientists who tell us how it *is*. Thus Ricci argues that political scientists, particularly those from the USA and the UK (who have written almost all of the histories of democratic theory), have been divided between those engaged on the "small conversation" of quasi scientific research and those engaged in the "great conversation" of justifying in theoretical or moral terms a particular vision of the 'good society' (Ricci 1984: 296-301). While this split has been undermined in recent times, it remains strong. It was at its strongest both at the time that the historiography of democratic theory began to develop as a literature, and in and in its main source countries.

The problem with 'normative' theory, is that it is mostly about norms, what they are, and why they are justified. In other words, normative theory is about defining and justifying visions of the good society. In the context of democratic

historiography, this justificatory urge can be seen as attempting to link 'democracy' to a broadly accepted theoretical structure. As Cohen puts it:

justification consists in a demonstration of its [democracy's] rightness, based upon some principle whose truth is evident or universally accepted. ... [J]ustification looks to some theoretical structure within which democracy may be grounded antecedent to practice (Cohen 1971: 241).

Historiography of democratic theory can be seen as assisting scholars and students of Political Science with their debates and interests. Their scholarship requires that their preferred model of democracy has a broad theoretical underpinning. In such a climate one does not delve too deeply into the details of the historical writings on democracy, simply because it will not yield the desired justificatory ammunition. A deep analysis would distract attention from the contemporary political purpose of the work.

The structure and methodology of the histories of democratic theory tell us much about the likely content of any particular work. The content tells us much about the authors and the discipline within which they work. In the light of this argument it is not surprising, therefore, that the historiography has taken the forms it has done. The literature is sourced from academics who work in liberal democratic societies. The concerns of the authors are, reasonably enough, informed by liberal democratic ideas and practices, and motivated by a desire to justify either liberal democracy or some other reasonable alternative. The latter appears usually to be something based on the new-left participatory model. Perhaps this is why, for example, revolutionary socialism negatively dominates the historians' discussions of socialism and democracy, at the expense of other forms of socialism. An historian writing in defence of liberal democracy, or a version of it, would find revolutionary socialism easier to present than the more amorphous social democratic or participatory models, because of its straightforward antagonism towards liberal/capitalist democracy. For an author

who favoured the participatory model,¹⁷ the either/or conflict between liberalism and revolutionary socialism could be presented as diminishing to both positions. Participatory-influenced democracy can be presented, in an unconscious Hegelian move, as synthesising two mutually exclusive sets of ideas. Thus they, too, do not wish to cloud their arguments with non-revolutionary socialist ideas, as this will reduce the starkness of the ideological conflict they wish to overcome.

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the historiography of democratic theory. It has identified the structure of the literature, the key authors, and the intellectual context within which these authors wrote. It has argued that the focus of the historiography of democratic theory has been on the definition and justification of democracy in the historical source material. This has been at the expense of an important issue in democratic theory, namely, the realisation of democracy. Realisation refers to the creation and replication of the conditions thought necessary for the survival of the democratic polity. This thesis seeks to expose this neglect, with this chapter advancing some possible reasons as to why it has occurred.

With the context of this thesis now clearly understood, we are in a position to proceed with an in-depth analysis of the place of realisation in the key schools of democratic thought. The following chapters will describe how the historiographical literature has approached each school, and then provide evidence of the neglect by way of this analysis. This will show that while the historical theorists placed a high value on the realisation of their theories, those that have written about them, have not. While the historical theorists regard realisation as the end of democratic theory, this end has tended to be replaced by

¹⁷ See for example, Dunn (1992: 239-266), Held (1987: 268-299); Held (1993); and Phillips (1991: 162-165).

the historians with the more traditional intellectual endeavour of definition and justification. Our analysis begins with the origins of democratic theory, in Ancient Greece.

CHAPTER TWO

The Foundations of Democratic Theory: Politics and Ethics in Ancient Greek Thought and Practice

"Q. It seems, then, that we have a grid of intelligibility for desire as an ethical problem?"

M.F. Yes, we now have this scheme ... [based on] three poles - acts, pleasure, and desire. ... In this Greek formula what is underscored is "acts", with pleasure and desire as subsidiary: acte - plaisir - {désir}. I have put desire in brackets because I think that in the Stoic ethics you start [to develop] a kind of elision of desire; desire begins to be condemned" (Foucault 1991a: 359).

"In the days when noble Myronides held office, no-one would have ventured to take money for joining the administration of the state. Each man attended, bringing his drink in a little goatskin, as well as a loaf for himself, two onions, and three olives. But nowadays, just like a gang of navvies, their main concern is to get their three obols whenever they do a job for the community" (Aristophanes 1979: 305-310).

This chapter addresses the issue of the realisation of democracy in the context of Ancient Greek thought. In doing so, it lays the groundwork for the rest of this thesis. The chapter differs from subsequent chapters, because its purpose is not to draw out the issue of realisation from a particular school of democratic theory. This is because, although the idea and ideals of democracy owe their origins to the Greeks, there was no such thing as Greek 'democratic theory'. Instead, Greek thought gives us the foundations on which later democratic theory is built, including important theoretical arguments about the realisation of the 'good' political system. The purpose of this chapter is to lay bare the basis of these arguments.

Democracy in Ancient Greece, and particularly Athens, was realised without any recorded systematic theorisation. Indeed it was pursued against a background of theoretical protestation by the most prominent philosophers and playwrights of the day. The fact that democracy was realised in Greece independently of theory calls into question the purpose of democratic theory and the reasons why

realisation is so important to it. If democracy can be realised without theory, what is the purpose of this theory? Why put forward arguments about the realisation of democracy, if it can be realised without those arguments? This is an important point to highlight at this early stage, because it is one to which we will return toward the end of this thesis, when we discuss the problematic relationship between ‘postmodernism’ and democratic theory. For now, however, this chapter addresses the issues in Greek thought and political practice that resonate through later democratic theory and its theorisation of the realisation of democracy.

Ancient Greek thought gives us many key concepts that inform later democratic theory. These key concepts include direct discussions about what ‘democracy’ is, and what is good or bad about it. These are two of the four criteria identified in the Introduction as central to democratic theory. Of the other two criteria, one, namely how democracy is to be initially achieved, was irrelevant in the Greek context, as democracy already had been achieved before any theorising about it. The last criterion, how democracy is to be realised, is also not addressed in Greek thought, but for different reasons. The realisation of democracy was not theorised because the theoreticians did not want it to be realised. They were, uniformly, *critics* of democracy. Their theoretical interest lay in, among other things, theorising how a *good* political system, and not democracy, may be realised. It is these arguments that are reversed in later times to support theories of how democracy may be realised.

This chapter argues that the substantive Greek theories of how the good political system is to be realised are found not in the many writings on politics from that period, but in other writings on public life. This is particularly the case in the writings on ethics that give instruction on how one should comport oneself in public. It is these ethical arguments that recur, albeit in a mutated form, in later republican thought, and some liberal and socialist arguments about the realisation of democracy. The core message emerging from our discussion of Greek ethical

thought is that realising the good political system depends on realising virtue in the citizenry, and that this virtue is, in turn, realised by individual citizens controlling their public behaviour.¹⁸

One would have a fruitless search if one went looking for a substantial discussion of the realisation of the virtuous citizenry in the historiographical literature on democratic theory. The focus of the historiographical literature on the political writings of prominent Greek thinkers such as Xenophon, Thucydides, Aristotle and Plato, leads to a failure to acknowledge the extent to which these ancient authors were making ethical rather than political criticisms of democracy. Thus, what emerges from the historiographical literature is a picture in which the direct references by the Ancient Greek authors to the meaning of democracy and its perceived shortcomings are well addressed, but the indirect arguments about realising the good political system, are not discussed. The literature is, therefore, incomplete. This chapter is designed to fill this gap and to make the first steps in pursuit of the issue of realisation in democratic theory as a whole.

In structure, this chapter will firstly discuss the historiographical literature's description of Greek democracy. We then turn to outline the major Greek writings on democracy. In doing so, the issue of a Greek 'theory' of democracy will be discussed. Thirdly, it will be shown by way of an examination of historical sources, in particular Aristotle and Plato, that Greek writings on politics cannot be divorced from those on public life without undermining the meaning of

¹⁸ Throughout this thesis, I follow Arendt's and Foucault's distinction between, and definitions of, morals and ethics: "The fact that we usually treat matters of good and evil in courses in 'morals' or 'ethics' may indicate how little we know about them, for morals comes from *mores* and ethics from *ethos*, the Latin and Greek words for customs and habit, the Latin word being associated with rules of behaviour, whereas the Greek is derived from *habitat*, like our 'habits'" (Arendt 1978: 5). Similarly, Foucault makes a strong distinction between morals and ethics. This distinction is not so much saying that the two terms are unrelated, but that they are interconnected yet distinct: morals being a universal code which "determines which acts are permitted or forbidden" (Foucault 1991a: 352), ethics being the code covering "the kind of relationship you ought to have with yourself, *rapport à soi*, which I call ethics, and which determines how the individual is supposed to constitute himself" (Foucault 1991a: 352 - original emphasis).

the political writings. The key aspect to emerge is the notion of ethics and the means by which it was thought to be generated. Ethics turns out to underpin the reasons given by the Ancient Greek authors as to why democracy was not a good political system, but paradoxically, it also turns out to be vital for underpinning the realisation of later theories of democracy.

The historiographical literature on Ancient Greek democracy

Histories of democratic theory have to begin somewhere. While some historians begin with the re-emergence of democracy in the early Renaissance period, most start with the Greeks. Others begin by defining terms, which also leads us to Ancient Athens. This is because the word *democracy* was invented by the Greeks, and the ancients debated vigorously most of the concepts that re-occur in the history of democratic theory. Whether the Athenians *invented* these concepts, is a moot point. What matters for this discussion is the fact that they associated them with discussions of ‘democracy’, even if, as is well documented, the association was usually a negative one. Thus, Moses Finley writes that “the Greeks and only the Greeks discovered democracy in ... [the same] sense as Christopher Columbus, not some Viking seaman, discovered America” (Finley 1985: 14). Other cultures, other societies, had organised themselves around some principles of collective self-government before the Greeks began to do so around the turn of the fifth century BC.¹⁹ It is the Greek activity, however, that has become part of the historical record of western democracy. For whatever reason, the Greeks influenced subsequent generations in ways other democratic precursors did not.

The historiographical literature provides us with a largely unbalanced picture of Greek and, especially, Athenian democracy. There appears to be an

¹⁹ Muhlberger and Paine (1993) provide a useful account of non-western forms of self-government that could be described as democratic in appearance.

assumption that a 'theory' of Athenian democracy can be inferred from the theoretical critique of it. In looking for a 'theory' many authors appear to be looking for a way of justifying democracy in Greek terms. The imbalance is driven by an almost exclusive focus on what the Ancient authors had to say in their political writings about the institutions of democracy, rather than their ethical works.

The institutional features of Athenian democracy occupy a significant place in the historiographical literature. In this aspect, the historians give us a clear picture of how the Greeks realised their democracy. At the heart of the development of democracy, we are told, both as an idea and as a practice, was the concept of the *polis*. The *polis*, or Greek city-state, was "originally no more than a fortified position on a hill" but over time and out of necessity "each *polis* became the centre of a distinct and separate community" (Berry 1989: 2-3). The *polis* comprised a community that was well aware of itself as a distinct entity, with its own customs, laws, language and currency. The *polis* was, by definition, an exclusive "kind of political society rather than state, if by state, we mean a structure of government" (Arblaster 1987: 14). The *polis* separated 'them' from 'us' in a dichotomous structure that led to an ultimate distinction between the 'political' way of life led by those within the *polis*, from the 'idiotic' one led by those unfortunate enough to be outside the public life of the community (Berry 1989: 1-9).²⁰

If the *polis* was a self-defining political society, it was not by any stretch of the imagination necessarily democratic. In fact, few Greek *poleis* were democratic and, with one exception, those that did develop recognisably democratic structures of government, found themselves unable to sustain democracy for any

²⁰ The Greek root word, *idios*, was not so much a pejorative term, but rather was a term used to separate the peculiar and the personal (ie the private) from the public (see Berry 1989: 1).

extended period of time (see Hornblower 1992: 3-12 & Lipson 1964: 20-21). The exception was Athens, a politically volatile coastal city-state, the largest of a number of stratified, patriarchal, slave-dependent cities in the warring Mediterranean peninsula that makes up modern Greece. For most of the years between 461 BC and 322 BC Athens experienced popular government, in the literal sense of the phrase (Arblaster 1987: 16). It was the Athenian democratic government that provoked the composition of the classic texts on democracy.

Deriving from the nature of the *polis*, and no doubt augmented by a conducive Mediterranean climate (Hattersley 1930: 23), Athenian democracy hinged on public involvement by an active citizenry. As Held notes, public and private were inextricably intertwined, and the Greek view was that the public good was intrinsic to a citizen's private worth (Held 1987: 17 & 1993: 16). The 'good life', a Greek obsession, was only possible through active involvement in the life of the *polis*. As such, Athenian democracy was *direct* democracy, at least of a certain kind. The citizens met in an open air Assembly, or *Ecclesia*, almost every week to debate and decide upon the major issues facing Athens (Held 1987: 21). Involvement in the *Ecclesia* was not only the right of all citizens, it was their public duty.

The people, or *demos*, form one half of the word 'democracy'. The historiographical literature notes that 'democracy' is a composite word, meaning in its most simple rule (*kratein*) of the people (*demos*). We find that the identity of the 'people' referred to in the word *demos* was a limited set of persons: citizens. The citizenry was born, not made. An Athenian citizen was an adult, over the age of 20, male, born of indigenous stock and not a slave. Mayo appropriately describes Athenian citizenship as "a co-operative undertaking of kinsmen" (Mayo 1960: 56). Taken together, Arblaster estimates that the citizenry comprised something in the order of one quarter or less of the Athenian population (Arblaster 1987: 23), or around 40,000 individuals (Finley 1985: 51).

Of these citizens, who would have ranged from peasants through to aristocrats, the active citizenry probably numbered somewhere less than half at any one *Ecclesia*, which had a minimum quorum of 6000 (Arblaster 1987: 18).

The *Ecclesia* sums up the Athenian approach to politics: it was an open, public forum in which individual citizens fought for influence through the use of lofty rhetoric. The majority ruled and the rhetors ruled the majority. Finley notes that despite the notional inclusion of peasants in the citizenry, it is reasonable to expect that the majority of those attending the *Ecclesia* were urban Athenian citizens, simply because they were more likely to have both the time to participate and access to the meeting area (Finley 1985: 52).

Despite the literal disenfranchisement of the majority of the population and the practical disenfranchisement of many citizens, a central feature remains crucial to the image of the *Ecclesia* in the historiographical literature: because participation was open to any citizen, no one *Ecclesia* had the same composition as the next. A consequence of this fluidity in participation was the potential for unpredictable decision making, as the group dynamics changed from meeting to meeting. This led contemporary philosophical critics to argue that Athenian democracy was the preserve of irrational incompetents (Mayo 1960:53).

If the account of Athenian democratic practices is clear in the historiographical literature, the attempt to recount a negative Athenian democratic ‘theory’ is not. There is a tendency to *infer* a negative ‘theory’ of democracy from a combination of the structure of Greek democratic institutions and some surviving philosophical tracts. This is despite there being serious reservations about the existence of such a theory in the large secondary literature on Classical political thought. Before addressing these reservations we will examine the theory of Greek democracy, as outlined in the historiographical literature, and the place that this theory holds in the literature.

In outlining a negative ‘theory’ of Athenian democracy, the historians of democratic theory discuss at length the Greek contributions to two key concepts of later democratic theories, liberty and equality, and under these, related ideas of participation, majoritarianism, rule of law, human nature, rationality and, the role of the State. These are summarised briefly below.

It is noted that the Greek philosophers viewed society as primary to politics. This primacy leads to a view that the values of society determine the political values and structures that are developed and, hence, whatever ‘theory’ that is read into these. This determinism can be seen in the example of that most problematic value, liberty, which the historians tell us, is intrinsically associated with Athenian democracy. Liberty in the Greek view was a form of ‘negative’ freedom- freedom from domination. Thus, Plato argues that a society that values individual liberty more highly than other things will inevitably produce a political system (ie democracy) that supports and reflects an absence of domination (Lipson 1964: 29). For the Athenian critics, and most especially Plato, the pursuit of liberty was wrong, because of its consequences- it produces disunity in the *polis* and a decline in authority, social stability and order. None of this is conducive to Plato’s ideal of a society harmonised under the “rule of wisdom” (Held 1987: 31). True ‘liberty’ for Plato is found in the pursuit of the ‘good life’ as he saw it.

A problem with democracy, Athenian critics argued, is that it presupposes rationality amongst participants. “The citizens are assumed to have a special kind of character: they will not sacrifice public welfare for their private interests, they also have the ability to absorb information and to make wise decisions about public affairs” (Mayo 1960: 47). Perhaps the most widespread Ancient criticism reported to us in the historiographical literature is just how irrational the citizenry could be. The Ancient historians, Thucydides and Xenophon, are shown to present instances of fickle and downright stupid democratic decision-making,

often with disastrous and deadly consequences. Plato theorised this through his ideal of the rational Republic, where each was to act according to his or her station, and the wisest would rule (Held 1987: 31).

The political system that demanded liberty, democracy, is shown by the historiographical authors to be uniformly criticised by the ancient authors because of its disruptive consequences. Democratic equality was criticised for the same reasons. However, the historiographical literature goes on to note that equality was also rejected in its own terms. Plato's oft-discussed concept of the 'philosopher king' is presented as a response to the 'unjust' nature of democracy in that it "treats all men as equal whether equal or not" (Held 1987: 29).

Aristotle is often presented as a more dispassionate observer of Athenian democracy than Plato. His descriptions in *The Politics* of the institutional features of Athenian democracy are quoted at length in the historiographical literature. He, too, is seen as a critic of democracy, primarily because its assumption of formal equality among citizens - "equality of outcomes", over equality of opportunity to participate - "equality of conditions" (Held 1987:19-20). It is noted that Aristotle argued that the best form of government, *polity*, rests on the rule of the 'best', not the majority. Athenian democracy was, in Aristotle's eyes, skewed in favour of one class of people, namely the most numerous class, the poor, whose principal desires are equality and liberty (Mayo 1960: 33), and the rule of the majority (Lipson 1964: 29): "democracy entails liberty and liberty entails equality" (Aristotle in Held 1987: 20).

Ultimately, the historiographical literature notes that the Athenian philosophical critique of democracy and democratic equality drew on the unanimous view that the role of the state is to govern in a manner that benefits all, rather than just one segment of society, no matter how numerous. *Stasis*, or faction, was one of the greatest evils to be avoided, greater even than demagoguery (Finley 1985: 43-48). Democracy, if one follows Aristotle's

analysis, is a political system based on stasis. It is little wonder, therefore, that democracy with its reliance on majority rule was of dubious merit to contemporary thinkers.

Equality in politics was, therefore, dubious in the eyes of the critics. Equality before the law, *isonomia*, however, was not. *Isonomia* is a principle that Arblaster believes to have been a precondition for popular government in Athens (Arblaster 1987:21-22), and was something that, as Mayo notes, Herodotus approved of strongly: “When the multitude rule, firstly it bears the finest name of all: equality of the laws” (Herodotus in Mayo 1960: 22). This Aristotle turns into the principle of the active, free, citizen: one who both rules and is ruled in turn (Berry 1989:6).

The historiographical literature also addresses the theme of political participation in Ancient Athenian democracy. The perennial question “why bother to get involved?” is reported as being obliquely discussed by the ancient critics. The historians note that many citizens were involved in decision making and it is Aristotle who provides one theoretical reason why they would want to be involved: self-interest. As noted above, because the poor are in the majority, it is in their interests to become involved and to direct government in a way that suits them (Lipson 1964: 31-32; Mayo 1960: 50).

We have then presented to us in the historiographical literature a negative ‘theory’ of Greek democracy, that is, a theory of why democracy was thought not to be a good thing. It is a small step to infer the existence of a countervailing positive theory of democracy from the prevailing philosophical critique.²¹ The discussion of the ‘theoretical’ underpinnings of Athenian democracy informs much of the subsequent descriptions of later theories of democracy in the

²¹ See Held (1987) as an example of this.

historiographical literature. As has already been suggested, the desire to find theory in Greek democracy appears to be driven by a modern-day desire to justify democracy in terms of a “theoretical structure within which democracy may be grounded antecedent to practice” (Cohen 1971: 241). The problem is that on the basis of the critique of democracy outlined above there could be no justification for Greek democracy, in Greek terms. This is because the Greek theoretical heritage provides neither a universal justificatory principle for democracy, nor, as we will see below, a theory on which to ground it. Democracy was regarded by the Ancient authors as wrong both in theory as well as practice.

As argued in Chapter One, it may perhaps be better to view the historiographical literature as not seeking to find a *Greek* justification of democracy, but rather as trying to provide *contemporary* democracy with an historical justificatory base. In describing the features of Athenian democracy, many of the historians take an approach designed to distinguish that which would be familiar to twentieth century observers from that which would not. This ‘comparative political institutions’ approach places a high value on subject matter that could be appropriated for use in the modern democratic state or theory. For example, open debate, the use of rhetoric, voting, majoritarianism are features of Athenian democracy identified in the literature as being ‘useful’. Conversely, other features, such as the appointment to key public positions by lot or rotation, and the collective involvement of citizens in large-scale juries are presented as Athenian ‘oddities’. Mayo dismisses these with the revealing statement: “[n]one of these is transferable to a modern state” (Mayo 1960: 54). Sartori extends this to the theoretical underpinnings of democracy in an extreme fashion: “Modern men want another democracy, in the sense that their ideal of democracy is not the same as the Greeks. ... Even if direct democracy were preferable, it is nonetheless impossible” (Sartori 1965: 251-255). Mayo, more subtly suggests that “we are the heirs not only of Greece but also of the religious earnestness of the Hebrews, and of the Christian message” (Mayo 1960: 56). As such, the

Greek subsumption of morality, law and human worth under the public eye of the *polis* cannot hold against the Christian transcendent view of the good, and of the individualism that so permeates modern political theory.

In sum then, the historiographical literature's description of Athenian democracy and its theoretical critics is not wrong, but rather, as I argue below, it is incomplete. The historians fail to locate the critical theories in the wider context of the historical authors' own writings, and Athenian philosophy in general. What was in fact an ethical critique of democracy, is read as a political critique. A more complete story would locate the critiques of democracy in their proper context, in particular in relation to the issue of how one should live the 'good life', which in Greek terms was translated into how one should behave in public.

Did the Ancient Greeks have a 'theory' of democracy?

The issue of 'theory' is an important gateway into understanding how the Greeks thought about public life in general and democracy in particular. It is questionable whether such a thing as Greek 'democratic theory' ever existed.

Finley expresses this powerfully:

I do not believe that an articulated democratic theory ever existed in Athens. There were notions, maxims, generalities ... but they do not add up to a systematic theory. And why should they? It is a curious fallacy to suppose that every social or governmental system in history must necessarily have been accompanied by an elaborate theoretical system. Where that does occur it is often the work of lawyers, and Athens had no jurists in the proper sense. Or it may be the work of philosophers, but the systematic philosophers of this period had a set of concepts and values incompatible with democracy (Finley 1985: 49).

Finley's first point, that there was no explicit, systematic theory of democracy developed in (or surviving from) Athens, goes some way toward explaining why the historiographical literature is on the whole rather piecemeal when it comes to Greek democratic 'theory'. If, as Finley argues, we are privy only to a set of key Greek values and political concepts that were not integrated in Antiquity into a

single theory of democracy, then any later account will only ever be able to *impose* order on a disorderly subject.

Finley's reference to the 'curious fallacy' behind the expectation that governmental systems presuppose an explicit theory presents a motivational force behind the attempts in the historiographical literature to impose a theory on Greek democratic practice. This literature, with its focus on comparative political theories, is structured in such a way that it presupposes the presence of a formal 'theory' in all its subject areas. Thus it could be argued that the articulation of an Athenian 'democratic theory', or even an Athenian 'theory of anti-democracy' appears piecemeal simply because it attempts to impose a theoretical structure on an a-theoretical subject.

I can find no reason to doubt the observation that there was no 'systematic theory' of Greek democracy. This, however, does not of itself preclude the possibility that: (a) a 'systematic theory' of democracy existed in Ancient times, but it was not preserved into modern times; or, (b) partial theoretical defences of democracy existed in Ancient times that have survived into the contemporary era. Given the text-based nature of this thesis, proposition (a) is a moot point and I accept, with some qualifications, Finley's statement that a systematic theory of democracy never existed. This acceptance is based upon Finley's argument that "the systematic philosophers of this period had a set of concepts and values incompatible with democracy" (Finley 1985: 49). In reserving a qualification for Finley's last statement, I am leaving open the possibility that proposition (b) holds, and that evidence for this may be found in the surviving historical record. Whether this record constitutes a 'systematic theory' is problematic, but it does challenge Jones' view that not only was there no systematic theory of democracy, but that there were no statements of theory at all that support democracy: "[i]t is curious that in the abundant literature produced in the greatest democracy of

Greece there survives no positive statements of democratic political theory” (in Raaflaub 1983: 517).

It would be misleading to say that nothing theoretical of a positive nature about democracy emerged from the period of Athenian democracy, even if Finley is right in saying that there was no systematic Greek “theory of democracy”. Cynthia Farrer’s excellent essay “Ancient Greek Political Theory as a Response to Democracy” implies in its title the a-theoretical nature of Athenian democratic practice. In her view, Greek political theory, especially that of Plato and Aristotle, was built on a desire to obliterate the openness required and created by democracy, all in the name of justice (Farrer 1992: 17-18). In this context justice is the expression of the good society. A just city secures the good of all individuals and their freedoms by subjecting them to the rule of reason (Farrer 1992: 30-31).

While Farrer’s argument is interesting, it does not preclude the survival of partial theoretical defences of Athenian democracy, merely that political theory, as we have come to know it, began in its most systematic form as a critique of democracy. I would argue in support of proposition (b) and against Jones, that there are some surviving theoretical defences of democracy, but they are admittedly partial. The principal surviving defences of democracy are to be found in some fragments from Democritus and Herodotus, Plato’s *Protagoras*, and somewhat problematically, in the Periclean funeral oration in Thucydides’ *History of the Peloponnesian War*. As we will see, it is reasonable to argue that a partial theoretical defence of democracy did exist, but that this does not compare well with the Ancient critique of democracy, both in terms of scope and forcefulness.

Democritus has left behind only a very limited legacy, but what there is shows a man clearly in favour of democracy as a political system. Better known as an

atomist and natural philosopher,²² the following fragment from Democritus provides us with a broadly positive supporting statement on democracy:

Poverty under democracy is as much to be preferred to what is called prosperity under the rule of lords as liberty is to slavery (Fragment 251 in Rodewald 1974: 85).

There is no detailed evidence from Democritus on the benefits he saw arising from democracy, but there survives at least one brief generalised statement on the benefits of democracy, linked closely to a notion of redistribution of wealth through taxation:

When the powerful take it upon themselves to pay taxes for the benefit of the have-nots, to help them, and to show them kindness, there at last you have compassion, the ending of alienation and the attainment of brotherhood; there you have mutual aid, and civic concord, and other benefits too numerous for anyone to list (Fragment 255 in Rodewald 1974: 85).

Economic democracy, therefore, in Democritus' view provides tangible economic and social benefits to the community. Unfortunately it is not entirely clear what Democritus means by 'democracy'. It may be that he was thinking more of the eleven Greek *poleis* that Robinson identifies as being likely to have developed simple democratic forms of self-government around the time that Athens developed its highly complex democratic institutions.²³

Herodotus also provides a brief argument on the virtues of Athenian democracy, arguing that the freedom of democracy made the Athenians into better, more motivated and independent people. While the ostensible basis for his opinion is limited to the performance of Athenian fighters on the battlefield, this could be seen as a metaphor for the advantages of a free life (*isegoria*) in general:

²² On Democritus' atomism see: Long and Sedley (1987, esp pp 106-109). See also Farrer (1988): 192-264.

²³ Robinson suggests that there are "compelling cases for actual functioning democracies in Achaea, Croton, Acragas, Ambracia, Argos, Chios, Cyrene, Heraclea Pontica, Megara, Naxos, and Syracuse", and that a "reasonable case" can be made for: "Chalcis, Cnidus, Cos, Elis, Mantinea, Metapontum, and Samos" (Robinson 1997: 126). See also Rodewald 1974: 85.

It is clear in every possible way how fine a thing is *isegoria*, because when governed by tyrants the Athenians were no better in war than any of their neighbours, but when freed from tyrants they were by far the best. So it is clear that when held down they deliberately fought shy, as working for a master, but when they were free each one of them was eager to labour for his own advantage (Herodotus 5: 78; in LACTOR 1973: 1).

Finally we also find that Protagoras provides some positive views on democracy. These views are clearly aimed at Athenian democracy, and are preserved in Plato's early dialogue of the same name.²⁴ Protagoras, a leading Sophist of the time, provides us with a defence of democratic practices on ethical grounds. Democracy *per se* is not mentioned, but democratic practice, namely the collective involvement of the citizenry in self-government of the *polis* is. Despite Plato's hostility to democracy, it is generally thought that he reports accurately the pro-democratic views of Protagoras.²⁵

The principal topic of the *Protagoras* is the nature and source of *arete*, usually translated as 'virtue', 'excellence', or in this case, 'wisdom' and 'skill'. Protagoras' views are contained in a long parable-like speech. Socrates criticises the Athenian *Ecclesia* as a forum in which the unskilled and, therefore, unqualified are inappropriately given the same influence in the running of the affairs of the Athenian state as their better qualified colleagues:

But when it is something to do with the government of the country that is to be debated, the man who gets up to advise them [in the *Ecclesia*] may be a builder or equally well a blacksmith or a shoemaker, merchant or shipowner, rich or poor, of good family or none. No-one brings it up against any of these ... that here is a man who is without any technical qualifications, unable to point to anybody as his teacher, is yet trying to give advice (*Protagoras*: 319 C-D).²⁶

Socrates argues that the skill [*arete*] required for good government is something that cannot be taught to everybody. Protagoras counters this with a

²⁴ In Plato (1956)- hereafter referred to as: *Protagoras*.

²⁵ See Guthrie's introduction to *Protagoras* (esp pp: 17-23).

²⁶ Where available, standard paragraph numbering is employed throughout this thesis.

startling 'state of nature' parable in which he suggests that humanity did not possess *arete* from its inception, but only developed it after people "gathered together in communities [and] injured one another for want of political skill" (*Protagoras*: 322 B). This skill, epitomised in this context as "justice and respect for their fellows", (*Protagoras*: 322 C-D) is now available to all people, but to differing degrees. Thus *arete* can be developed through training. The democratic thrust of this argument emerges in the following paragraph:

Thus it is, Socrates, and from this cause, that in a debate involving skill in building, or in any other craft, the Athenians, like other men, believe that few are capable of giving advice. ... But when the subject ... involves political wisdom [*arete*] ... they listen to every man's opinion, for they think that everyone must share in this kind of virtue (*Protagoras*: 322 E - 323 A).

Protagoras argues that the Athenian community depends on a political system that encourages the sharing of views amongst equals in the running of that community. He suggests that not only does this occur in practice, it is a necessary component of the Athenian community's existence, "otherwise the state [community] would not exist" (*Protagoras*: 323 A). In treating *arete* as something that all persons possess, but which may be further developed through instruction (and for the payment of a fee), Protagoras is putting forward a profoundly democratic argument, in a profoundly Greek form. Communities can and should govern themselves: "your countrymen act reasonably in accepting the advice of smith and shoemaker on political matters" (*Protagoras*: 324 D).

While Protagoras' views do not constitute a systematic theory of democracy, they do offer some considered opinions on the capacity of Athenian citizens to govern themselves. If we take Democritus, Herodotus, and Protagoras together, we find arguments: providing a general justification of democracy as a system of government (Democritus); outlining the positive characteristics democracy brings out in the citizenry (Herodotus); as well as a specific argument in favour of the capacity of Athenians to govern themselves (Protagoras). This could not be

called a 'systematic theory' of democracy, but it may well amount to a partial theoretical defence of democracy.

It would be a long leap indeed, however, to move from a partial theoretical defence of democracy to even a partial theory of democracy, let alone a full theory. The problem with attempting to infer even a partial 'democratic theory' from the writings of Democritus, Herodotus and Protagoras, is that they do not contain any statement about the realisation of democracy. Their arguments are about justifying democracy, in the context of the existence of a democratic system of government. Why would they bother to theorise the realisation of something that already has been realised?

The politico-ethical critique of democracy

While there may have been no theory of Greek democracy, there is, as we have seen in the historiographical literature, a systematic critique of democracy that survives from Greek philosophy. I believe that this should not be read as merely a political critique, but rather as a political extension of an ethical argument. In the section that follows, I outline the basic aspects of the political critique of democracy as a precursor to locating it in its broader ethical context.

Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War*²⁷ is quoted extensively in the historiographical literature, especially his account of Pericles' Funeral Oration. One could question, however, both the authenticity of, and Thucydides' purpose in, writing these words.²⁸ While the Oration appears to celebrate Athenian democracy and citizenship this need not have been its purpose, nor does it accord with Thucydides' own views on democracy. Pericles declaims:

²⁷ Thucydides (1975)- hereafter referred to as: *History*.

²⁸ In support of the authenticity of the ideas, if not the exact words reported by Thucydides, see Monson (1994: 271-272) and Loraux (1986).

Our constitution is called a democracy because power is in the hands not of a minority but of the whole people. When it is a question of settling private disputes, everyone is equal before the law; when it is a question of putting one person before another in positions of public responsibility, what counts is not membership of a particular class, but the actual ability which the man possesses. No one, so long as he has it in him to be of service to the state, is kept in political obscurity because of poverty. ... We regard wealth as something to be properly used, rather than as something to boast about. As for poverty, no one need be ashamed to admit it: the real shame is in not taking practical measures to escape from it. ... [W]e do not say that a man who takes no interest in politics is a man who minds his own business; we say he has no business here at all (*History*: 2 (37-40)).

While this appears to be a most laudatory defence of Athenian democracy, and is treated by many historiographical authors as such, I would suggest this fails to consider the context within which Thucydides pens these words. Rather than reading this passage as praise of democracy, one could interpret it as an example of that other great Greek invention, tragic irony. This is a *funeral* speech, for those who suffered death as a result of the ‘irrationality’ of the *demos*.

Thucydides’ *History* recounts a number of particularly bellicose decisions taken by the *demos*. These decisions led Athens into a disastrous series of conflicts with enemies they really did not appreciate or understand, with an unrealistic self-confidence born of spectacular successes in the recent past against the Persians. Thus, with regards to the expedition to Sicily, he notes that:

the Athenians resolved to sail against Sicily ... and if possible, to conquer it. They were for the most part ignorant of the size of the island and the numbers of its inhabitants, both Hellenic and native, and they did not realise that they were taking on a war of almost the same magnitude as their war against the Peloponnesians (*History*: 6 (1)).

The Sicilian expedition ended in “the most calamitous of defeats; for they were utterly and entirely defeated; their sufferings were on an enormous scale; their losses were, as they say total; army, navy, everything was destroyed, and out of many, only few returned” (*History*: 7 (87)). The democratic system allowed irrational passions to override rational policy making. Thucydides himself believed that a more restricted form of government was better than democracy. He suggests that during the short lived oligarchic government of the Five Thousand “for the first time, at least in my life, the Athenians appear to have been

well governed. There was a reasonable and moderate blending of the few and the many” (*History*: 8 (97)).²⁹

While Thucydides’ position on democracy is probably less supportive than generally portrayed in the historiographical literature, there is no disagreement that the majority of those writing about democracy in Athens did so from a critical perspective. These critics included the well-known names of: Aristophanes, Aristotle, Pseudo-Xenophon,³⁰ Plato and Xenophon. I will only dwell briefly on the works of these critics, as the gist of their arguments is reasonably well covered in the historiographical literature.

In his *Republic*,³¹ Plato reports that Socrates posits five “kinds of political constitution” each producing a corresponding moral ‘type’ of person who would be most highly regarded within each kind of government (*Republic*: IV (445-449)). One type of government is, of course, his philosopher-led republic. The other four form a degenerative cycle of governments/dominant moral ‘types’. These are: timarchy, oligarchy, democracy and tyranny. Each arises in succession as a response to the previous system. Unless it is broken, by moving to the Platonic republic, the cycle will continue. Plato’s purpose is not to describe the institutions of the various types of government but, rather, to get at the moral character that they reflect. Thus, the object of our interest, democracy, is portrayed by Plato as driven by an excessive desire for liberty, whereas oligarchy, whence democracy develops, is driven by a desire for money and wealth (*Republic*: VIII (555-557)). Regarding the two desires as mutually exclusive (*Republic*: VIII (555)), Plato suggests that in a democracy:

²⁹ See Farrar (1988) for a more detailed discussion of Thucydides’ position on democracy.

³⁰ See: Pseudo-Xenophon (1971).

³¹ Plato (1955)- hereafter referred to as: *Republic*.

[1]liberty and free speech are rife everywhere; anyone is allowed to do what he likes ... you are not obliged to be in authority, however competent you may be, or to submit to authority, if you do not like it; you need not fight when your fellow citizens are at war, nor remain at peace when they do, unless you want peace; and though you may have no legal right to hold office or sit on juries, you will do so all the same if the fancy takes you (*Republic*: VIII (557-558)).

In other words, democracy is “an agreeable form of anarchy with plenty of variety and an equality of a peculiar kind for equals and unequals alike” (*Republic*: VIII (558)).

In his *Politics*,³² Aristotle discusses the various forms of government that he is aware of, identifying in typical style, three ‘true’ forms of government and three ‘perversions’ of these. The true forms of government are: 1) a monarchy; 2) an aristocracy; and 3) a constitutional government (or *polity*). Their corresponding perversions are: 1) a tyranny; 2) an oligarchy; and 3) a democracy (*Politics*: III (1279a 23 - 1279b 6)). The least disliked of the perverted forms of government is democracy (*Politics*: IV (1289b 4-5)), and the most preferred version of true government, is the constitutional one which “may be described generally as a fusion of oligarchy and democracy” (*Politics*: IV (1293b 34-35)), insofar as it seeks to chart a mean course between the concern with freedom and equality in a democracy and the concern with wealth and excellence in an oligarchy (*Politics*: IV (1293b 32 - 1296b 11)).

But what is a democracy for Aristotle and why is it a perversion? Aristotle argues that:

the basis of a democratic state is liberty; which, according to the common opinion of men, can only be enjoyed in such a state One principle of liberty is for all to rule and to be ruled in turn, and indeed democratic justice is the application of numerical not proportionate equality, whence it follows that the majority must be supreme Another [characteristic of democracy] is that a man should live as he likes, ... ruled by none, if possible, or, if this is impossible, to rule and be ruled in turns; and so it contributes to the freedom based on equality (*Politics* VI (1317a 40 - 1317b 17)).

³² Aristotle (1988)- hereafter referred to as: *Politics*.

He then goes on to outline the structure of Classical direct democracy as:

the election of officers by all out of all; that all should rule over each, and each in turn over all; that the appointment to all offices, or to all but those which require experience and skill, should be made by lot; that no property qualification should be required for offices, or only a very low one; that a man should not hold the same office twice, or not often, or in the case of few military offices; that the tenure of all offices, or as many as possible, should be brief; that all men should sit in judgement, or that judges selected out of all should judge, in all matters, or in most and in the greatest and most important ...; that the assembly should be supreme over all causes, or at any rate over the most important, and the magistrates over none or over a very few (*Politics*: 144-145; VI (1317b 18-30)).

Such principles provide an insight into the extremely wide scope of popular control over public affairs which occurred in democratic Athens both before and after the Peloponnesian War, interspersed with short-lived oligarchic governments.

Confirmation of the accuracy of Aristotle's description can be found in Herodotus' very early description of Athenian democracy. Herodotus presents a 'discussion' on the relative merits of various forms of government among the leading Persians following the death of the monarch, Cambyses, and subsequent civil unrest. In a clear reference to Greek democratic practices Herodotus reports that:

Otanes wanted to entrust the government to the whole Persian nation. ... 'if the *plethos* [the many] rule, their virtue lies first in the fair name of *isonomia*, and second in the fact that they commit none of the sins of a single ruler. All offices are assigned by lot and their power is subject to scrutiny, and all plans are publicly debated. So I declare my opinion that we should lay aside monarchy and give more power to the *plethos*. For all good lies with the majority' (Herodotus 3: 80-82.4; in LACTOR 1973: 2).

The above summary of how the Ancient critics viewed democracy is consistent with the story presented in the historiographical literature. It is, however, only half the story. The Ancient critics of democracy were not merely negative critics of democracy as a political system. As the quotation from Plato's *Republic* above implies, the critique of democracy stems from ethical understandings of how people should behave in public. I now turn to outline the principal features of the ethical critique of democracy. Following this we will delve more deeply into the

ethical thought of Aristotle and Socrates, in order to draw out the ways in which this would underpin their idea of the good political system.

The Greeks viewed politics and other forms of public life as inseparable. The realm of politics could not be isolated from other parts of the public domain. The institutions of Greek politics were built on shared understandings of public behaviour. In this sense, therefore, there is a need to view Greek democracy as an ethical institution.

It has been unfashionable in some circles to use the term 'institution' when looking at theories about politics. Countering this, the prominent historian of Classical political institutions, Mogens Herman Hansen, has mounted a defence of an institutional approach to the study of Athenian democracy in the context of what he terms a contemporary "shift in focus of interest from institutions to extra-institutional forces such as political groups, public opinion and social structures" (Hansen 1989a: 263). His defence is not that the contemporary shift away from political morphology is wrong, but that when it is applied thoughtlessly to Athenian democracy, the results may be "misleading and ... dangerous" (Hansen 1989a: 269). Elite power in Greece was exercised "*through* political institutions, not independently of or in opposition to institutions" and the "Greek *poleis* in general and democratic Athens in particular were notorious for their abundance of political institutions" (Hansen 1989a: 264-267). The extra-institutional focus of some contemporary historical work is misplaced, he argues, because it fails to locate the source material in its appropriate context. This source material, on which I will be drawing below, is a special kind of rhetoric which was "almost exclusively official and political, and hardly existed in the private sphere" (Hansen 1989a: 266-267).

What does Hansen's argument mean for the study of the Athenian source material on democracy? Put simply it is this: the institutions of Athenian politics are of vital importance to understanding their views on democracy. The

'institutions' of Athenian politics were not limited, however, merely to formal political structures, but extended to the 'rules' by which these institutions operated. Politics was a public affair, and the rules of public behaviour form a crucial part of the operations of Greek political structures. Failure to abide by these rules left one open to, at best, ridicule and diminution of one's public worth, and at worst, it led to one's removal from the *polis*. Such a 'removal' was a serious affair, and could extend from social shunning to exile and, ultimately, to death, as we can see in the case of Socrates.

One could see the fate of Socrates as being the result of his failure to follow the generally accepted 'rules' of public behaviour. Holway argues that Socrates:

rebels against legitimate authority. He is guilty of *hubris*, not they [the *demos* and its leaders]. His arrogant claims of kinship to a more than human power and knowledge derive from all too human - and, in Archaic and Classical Greek culture, all too common fantasies of divine superiority (Holway 1994: 582).

Socrates threatens the supremacy of the *demos* by claiming to hold superior knowledge. Whether it is the truth of this knowledge itself that is offensive, as Bloom and Strauss have argued,³³ or as Holway argues, that Socrates' claims offended by dismissing the "political capacities of ordinary men: to create, govern and defend polities based on mutual accommodation, respect and responsibility for their common well-being" (Holway 1994: 586) does not matter here. It is the very fact that public offence was created that matters. And the cause of this offence? Socrates' claims to superiority clashed with the 'self-controlling' ethical virtues expected of Greek citizens. Socrates violated the standards of public behaviour, and the irony is, he knew it:

Men of Athens, I honour and love you; but I shall obey God rather than you, and while I have life and strength I shall never cease from the practice and teaching of philosophy, exhorting any one whom I meet after my manner, and convincing him, saying: O my friend, why do you, who are citizen of the great and mighty and wise city of Athens, care so much about laying up the greatest amount of money

³³ See for example: Strauss (1983), and Bloom (1968) and (1987). Also Holway (1994: 589-590).

and honour and reputation, and so little about wisdom and truth?
(*Apology*: 30).³⁴

Athenian public life was, as we have seen above, influenced not only by the formal structures of its political institutions, but also heavily influenced by the notion of ‘correct’ public behaviour, or of ethics. The desirability of this behaviour was recognised by both supporters and detractors of democracy. The critique of democracy was linked to considerations of ethics, which in turn was based on notions of virtue, moderation, or balance.

Both Protagoras (as reported by Plato), and Pericles (as reported by Thucydides) share similar opinions about the ethical basis of the operations of Athenian democracy with their more well-recorded critics. This opinion goes to the ethical heart of Greek democracy, and to the nature of the critique of it. Even while extolling the virtues of individual freedom and public action Pericles makes a clear reference to the need for the Athenian citizen to act ethically. He notes that “[w]e give our obedience to those whom we put in positions of authority, and we obey the laws themselves, especially those which are for the protection of the oppressed, and *those unwritten laws which it is an acknowledged shame to break*” (*History*: 2 (37) - my emphasis).

Protagoras, too, links ethics, in the form of the virtue of moderation or *sophrosyne*, with *arete*, and democracy, noting that the skill of shared political wisdom “must always follow the path of justice and moderation” (*Protagoras*: 323 A). Thus not only must a democratic citizen give himself over to external control through the laws of the *polis*, as befits the notion of *isonomia*, he must also internalise a behavioural code and act upon himself to ensure that his actions are in line with this. He must moderate his behaviour, both in the sense of

³⁴ Plato (1992a)- hereafter referred to as: *Apology*.

restricting behaviour not explicitly regulated by law, and in the sense of acting for the best interest of the community, and not the self.

Most of the ethical commentary on democracy is, however, associated with the strongest critics of it. The principal objection is to the immoderate behaviour that was seen to be a product of the democratic system. By definition, such behaviour violates one of the primary tenets of Greek ethical thought. This position can be found in all of the critics including Aristophanes, Aristotle, Pseudo-Xenophon, Plato, Thucydides and Xenophon. I will be focussing my discussion on Plato and Aristotle, but in order to demonstrate the widespread nature of these opinions, I will briefly mention a few of the others below.

Thucydides in his *History* catalogues a series of unbalanced decisions taken by the *demos*, when they allowed their passion to overcome their reason. He notes that in relation to an ultimately disastrous military campaign, it was pointed out to the assembled Athenians that perhaps they ought to restrain themselves in the light of recent calamities, and that they should not “indulge in hopeless passions” (*History*: 6 (13)) for a victory in a far off place. However, the young supporters of war whipped up such support that the “excessive enthusiasm of the majority ... [left] the few who actually were opposed to the expedition ... afraid of being thought unpatriotic if they voted against it, and [they] therefore kept quiet” (*History*: 6 (24)).

As a companion piece to Thucydides’ *History*, Xenophon wrote his *Hellenica*, or *A History of My Times*.³⁵ In it he criticises the hasty decision-making of the *demos*. He reports that six generals were put to death as a consequence of an unconstitutional proposal put forward in the *Ecclesia* in response to the failure by the generals to rescue all the Greek sailors left in the ocean after a great and

³⁵ Xenophon (1979). Hereafter referred to as: *Hellenica*.

victorious sea battle. When it was pointed out to the *Ecclesia* that the motion was an unconstitutional one “the great mass shouted out that it was an intolerable thing if the people was not allowed to do what it wanted to do” (*Hellenica*: I. 7. 12-13). When the presiding committee demurred at putting the question to the vote:

the crowd shouted out that, if they refused [to put the motion to the vote] they [the committee] should be prosecuted. At this all the members of the presiding committee except Socrates, the son of Sophronicus, were terrified, and agreed to put the motion to the vote (*Hellenica*: I. 7. 14-15).

The Generals were found guilty and put to death, however “[q]uite soon afterwards the Athenians regretted what they had done and voted that complaints should be lodged against those who had deceived the people” (*Hellenica*: I. 7. 35). Similarly, the playwright Aristophanes makes frequent criticisms of the weakness of the *demos*:

O *Demos*, the sway you hold is fine indeed, seeing that all men look on you with fear as a tyrant. Yet you are easily led by the nose; you love to be flattered and fooled, and always gape at any speechmaker and your mind takes a holiday! (*Knights*: 1111-1120; in LACTOR 1973: 17).

However, it is Socrates and Aristotle who offer the most systematic ethical critique of democracy. Plato discusses Socrates’ position on democracy and the democratic man at some length in *The Republic*. For Thucydides and Xenophon immoderate behaviour was merely an inherent possibility within the democratic system, whereas Socrates argues that democracy positively encourages it. Socrates argues that in a democratic structure there would be no point in people restraining their ‘unnecessary appetites’, as one would do in an oligarchic state.³⁶ In fact, in a democracy:

modesty, and self-control, dishonoured and insulted as the weaknesses of an unmanly fool, are thrust out into exile; and the whole crew of unprofitable desires take a hand in banishing moderation and frugality, which, as they will have it, are nothing but churlish meanness. So they take possession of the soul which they

³⁶ Or in fact, by implication, in Plato’s ideal state.

have swept clean, as if purified for initiation into higher mysteries; and nothing remains but to marshal the great procession bringing home Insolence, Anarchy, Waste and Impudence (*Republic*: VIII (560)).

Whereas moderation is a natural state for the good and just man, Plato suggests that democracy actively undermines it, leading to one or other of the passions dominating the individual. In a society in which this occurs, a tyrannical dictatorship is likely to develop (*Republic*: VIII (569) - IX (571-572)).

Plato's position on the ethical weaknesses of democracy is pitched at a highly abstract level. Aristotle argues along similar lines, but adds greater specificity to his critique. His concerns relate mainly to the *popular* aspect of democracy. Given that he defines the ends of good government as directed to achieving the common good of all who live in the state, and not just those who rule it (*Politics* III (1279a 17-22)), it is little wonder that he finds democracy unacceptable, because the ruling body must involve persons whose concerns are too immediate, too selfish. Thus he suggests that rather than include everyone, that is adult Athenian-born men, the criteria for citizenship should be restricted to those who can achieve *arete*, namely property owners, and persons with leisure time enough for political activity. This discounts artisans, tradesmen, or farmers (*Politics*: VII (1328b 24 - 1329a 26)), and certainly excludes women, slaves, foreigners, resident aliens or children from being citizens (*Politics* III (1277b 34 - 1278a 14)). Only local-born resident, free, adult, non-working, property owning men would appear to be capable of the detachment thought necessary for considering the good of the community above their own special interests.

Democracy, according to Aristotle, puts the wrong people in charge. It is not that they are necessarily bad, but that they are too close to the realm of necessity. They are unlikely to act always as they rationally think best. Such failure occurs when "the right end is set before men, but in practice they fail to attain it; in other cases they are successful in all the contributory factors, but they propose

themselves a bad end; and sometimes they fail in both” (*Politics*: VII. 1331b 31-34). Such activity Aristotle describes as ‘incontinent’ and ‘intemperate’ actions respectively, both of which represent some form of ethical failure. According to Aristotle, it is those persons that qualify as citizens who are most likely to be able to conduct themselves ethically. It is these people, therefore, who should govern (*Politics*: VII 1332a 33 - 1332b8) and as they clearly will never be in the majority, some form of non-democratic government is going to be best.

Realising the ethical life: Socrates and Aristotle

It is clear from the preceding discussion that the critique of Athenian democracy has a profoundly ethical flavour. It is also clear that such ‘ethics’ involve self-control in the form of ‘moderation’, ‘temperance’ and the like. The Ancient critics link democracy to a social structure that, in its valorising of individual liberty, cuts the citizenry free from such repressive social responsibilities. As a result, the centrifugal forces of liberty and equality are likely to undermine the conditions for social stability. But what is the scope of such repressive ‘ethics’ and how was it thought to work? In finding answers to this we will illuminate the ethical base underlying the critique of Athenian democracy.

The two most prominent critics of Athenian democracy, Socrates and Aristotle provide us with a schema upon which to draw this ethical structure. The purpose of the Socratic and Aristotelian ethical structures is to map out the nature and conditions for virtue. Virtue is portrayed as primarily a characteristic of the individual, relating to how one behaves, particularly in the public arena. Virtue promotes social harmony by controlling individual behaviour.

As we have seen the Greeks shared a ‘determinist’ view of governmental structures. The dominant individual character ‘types’ in a society were thought to have a natural pair in governmental structural ‘types’. By extension, the

governmental 'type' will reinforce the conditions that would favour its concomitant individual character 'type'. Thus, for example, predominance of persons with democratic characters in a society will lead to the institution of democratic governments. In turn, democracy will create conditions that favour the development of persons with democratic characters.

The problem, as Socrates and Aristotle saw it, was that the democratic character is not predisposed towards virtue. For Socrates, this is primarily a product of individual ignorance, which is reinforced by a society that does not value knowledge highly enough, and does not have sufficient external constraints in place to prevent individuals acting *viciously*,³⁷ either by accident, or through ignorance. For Aristotle, it is more of a question of the closeness of the individual to the realm of necessity. The closer you are, the less you are able to control your response to bodily appetites; and it is the loss of control that leads to a loss of virtue.

Socrates'³⁸ position on ethics and virtue is very simple, but nonetheless powerful. His approach is scattered across a series of dialogues recorded by both Plato and Xenophon, which focus on the *conditions* for virtue rather than the details of the virtues themselves. Indeed, it has been argued both in Antiquity and in modern times that Socrates saw only one primary 'virtue' from which all others are derived. This 'virtue' is knowledge. Subsidiary 'virtues' should be seen, following Vlastos, as a necessary product of knowledge: "all those who have virtue necessarily have knowledge and vice versa" (Vlastos 1983: 513).

³⁷ I am using this term in its literal sense as the opposite of virtuously. Given the fact that the word has additional connotations in English, it will be italicised when used in this restricted sense.

³⁸ For the purposes of this chapter, it is assumed that Socrates' views are those that are attributed to him in the various sources. Where, however, Plato uses a different protagonist, such as in the later dialogues, it is assumed that these views represent an extension of the Socratic line of thought, rather than a complete departure from it.

Socrates presents two recurring ‘Socratic paradoxes’ that, put crudely, argue that knowledge is the source of all virtue, and that no-one will deliberately act *viciously*. Socrates is seeking to establish the conditions for justice based on knowledge. He also seeks to protect the ignorant, those persons who do not, or cannot, apprehend right moral principles. This, I would argue, is a major reason for his concern for law and social order. For Socrates, law and its enforcement guides the actions of the ignorant. The knowledgeable will be able to see the moral principle behind a law and, therefore, will also act in line with it.

In *The Protagoras*, Plato introduces a recurring theme in Socratic philosophy, namely, that acting contrary to one’s reason is impossible because “nothing will force him [the individual] to act otherwise than as knowledge dictates ... [the view that] those who act in this way are overcome by pleasure or pain ... is not correct” (*Protagoras*: 352). Socrates maintains a simple binary oppositional notion of virtue and vice characterised by the simple opposition of good and evil. The key to understanding good and evil activity is contained within the quotation above: knowledge.

In true Socratic style, knowledge is posited as the point upon which virtuous action is based. The person who knows what good activity is, will necessarily always do it, as good activity is aimed at “a pleasant and painless life” (*Protagoras*: 358b), which presumably is what people desire. He argues further that no-one, therefore, will deliberately do evil actions insofar as this would be contrary to human nature (*Protagoras*: 358d). Thus, as the nature of human activity is oriented towards the good, actions that are contrary to this must be actions based on a lack of knowledge: “‘being mastered by pleasure’ really is - ignorance” (*Protagoras*: 357e). It follows that what is required for one to live a good life is knowledge: knowledge of the pleasures and the pains and how to balance them - too much pleasure now may lead to pain in the future, a little pain now may lead to future pleasure (*Protagoras*: 353-358): “our salvation in life has

turned out to lie in the correct choice of pleasure and pain - more or less, greater or smaller, nearer or more distant ... [it has turned out to be] a question of measurement, consisting as it does in a consideration of relative excess, defect or equality” (*Protagoras*: 357a-b).

The Socratic insistence on the impossibility of acting contrary to knowledge is softened somewhat in later Platonic dialogues. In the later dialogues, however, Plato does concede that in fact one may act contrary to knowledge, *but never willingly*. He suggests that such action may be conceived in terms of unjust activity. In *The Laws*,³⁹ he argues that “the unjust [*vicious*] man is doubtless wicked; but that the wicked man is in that state only against his will” (*Laws*: 860). Plato, speaking in the voice of the Athenian, argues that injustice, conceived very broadly, is to be countered by law, which has both a preventative or curative function (to prevent the person from doing injustice again), and a restorative function (to compensate the victim of injustice) (*Laws*: 862). Someone who cannot be cured, should be removed from committing further injustice through the death penalty (*Laws*: 862-863).

Plato subordinates the individual Greek virtues, that we will see outlined in Aristotle’s works, to knowledge. Occasionally he does discuss these virtues, particularly in relation to the capacities of the passions to upset the natural rationality of men. Thus, in addition to accidental involuntary *viciousness*, where one acts accidentally against one’s reason, the emotion of anger, which is “innate, unruly and difficult to fight ... causes a good deal of havoc by its irrational force” (*Laws*: 863). The desirative force of Pleasure which, personified as a woman, “achieves whatever her will desires by persuasive deceit that is irresistibly compelling” (*Laws*: 863) also forms the base for involuntary *vicious* actions. Thus “some people are ‘conquerors of’ their desire for pleasure and

³⁹ Plato (1970)- hereafter referred to as: *Laws*.

feelings of anger, while others are conquered by them ... [and that] each of these influences often prompts every man to take the opposite course to the one which attracts him and which he *really* wishes to take” (*Laws*: 863). The vice here is:

the mastery of the soul by anger, fear, pleasure, pain, envy, and desires, whether they lead to actual damage or not. But no matter how states and individuals think they can achieve the good, it is the conception of what is good that should govern every man and hold sway in his soul, even if he is [sometimes] a little mistaken. If it does, every action done in accordance with it, and any part of a man’s nature that becomes subject to such control, we have to call just (*Laws*: 863-864).

Plato argues that beyond the “simple needs [of what is required for bodily health] the desire for a whole variety of luxuries is unnecessary” (*Republic*: VIII (559)). Such luxuries, particularly rich food and sexual gratification, should be controlled by the individual through “early discipline and education” (*Republic*: VIII (559)). It is not surprising, therefore, that in the *Phaedo*⁴⁰ we find Socrates being particularly critical of luxury and “other ways of indulging the body” as “the true philosopher would despise” such indulgences (*Phaedo*: 62). A philosopher, of all people, should know better: “Is not the calm, control, and disdain of the passions which many call temperance, a quality belonging only to those who despise the body, and live in philosophy?” (*Phaedo*: 66).

The above exposition undermines Vlastos’ proposition that Plato’s Socrates should be seen as something of a moral ‘democrat’, and that he was seeking to include everyone in the task of the production of virtue. According to Vlastos, because virtue is the product of knowledge and because the production of knowledge is the task of rulers, then it follows that everyone should be involved in ruling. This is why, Vlastos argues, Socrates says in the *Crito* (Plato: 1992) that he favours the laws of Athens over any other city (Vlastos: 1983). This argument only holds if one accepts that Socrates thought ‘everyone’ capable of the rejection of the flesh in favour of knowledge. From the above quotations,

⁴⁰ Plato (1992d)- hereafter referred to as: *Phaedo*.

Socrates is clearly associating self-control with a limited set of persons, namely philosophers.⁴¹

As we have seen, one of the principal concerns of Socratic philosophy is to establish that knowledge is the source of virtue. It is a core Socratic proposition that individual ethical qualities, such as virtue or justice, can only be fully developed in a society exhibiting the same qualities. Thus, for example, in answering the question ‘what is justice?’ he focuses not on justice itself, but on the characteristics of a just society. In other words, Socrates was more interested in the conditions that produced virtue, rather than the virtue itself and, as we have seen, the principal source of virtue is knowledge.

What is the best way to produce a society based on the rule of knowledge? In the *Republic*, and the *Laws*, Socrates/Plato spends time musing on the way in which an ideal society based on knowledge would operate. His well-known ideal society in the *Republic* is divided into three functional classes: the Guardians-proper (the ‘philosopher rulers’), the Auxiliaries and, for want of a suitable description, ‘the rest’. The philosopher-rulers have access to truth (knowledge) and, therefore, their function is to rule for: “[i]f philosophers have the ability to grasp eternal and immutable truth, and those who are not philosophers are lost in multiplicity and change, which of the two should be put in charge of a state?” (*Republic* VI: 484). The function of the Auxiliaries is to “enforce the decisions of the Rulers” (*Republic* III: 414), while the function of the vast bulk of society is to obey. In this virtuous society, the philosophers would base their right to rule on their special access to knowledge.

⁴¹ One can find support for this both in the Platonic dialogue referred to and in Xenophon’s rather notorious ‘Socratic’ dialogues. Xenophon suggests that Socrates said “every man ought to cultivate self-discipline as the foundation of moral goodness, and to cultivate it in his character before anything else. Without it, who could either learn anything good or practise it to any degree worth mentioning? Or who could escape degradation both of body and of mind if he is a slave to his appetites?” (Xenophon 1990a- *Memorabilia*: 1.5.4). See also *Memorabilia*: 4.5.

In the *Laws*, Plato revisits the Socratic utopia in an orderly, knowledge-based society called ‘Magnaesia’. Importantly for this discussion, he spends some time elaborating on the translation of knowledge into law. This is important because it is the law (in the broadest sense) that protects the ignorant by giving them rules to follow. Laws and customs “bind a state together, and the permanence of the one kind of norm depends on that of the other” (*Laws* VII: 793). Thus Plato completes the Socratic loop in positing knowledge as the source of virtue, and law as the translation of knowledge into rules for the ignorant to follow.

Socrates preferred to focus broadly on the conditions for the creation of virtue. Aristotle, on the other hand, provides a detailed exposition of individual virtues along with his notion of ethics in his *Nicomachean Ethics*.⁴² Aristotle sets humans (adult men in particular) apart from the rest of the animal and vegetable kingdom by positing that men have both body and souls. The living body is little different from vegetable life (*NE*: 38), the ability to feel and react to sensation is little different from animals (*NE*: 38). What sets men apart is their possession of the ‘soul’, with its principal feature being the capacity for reason (*NE*: 38). Human life must involve the exercise of this capacity if it is to be beyond mere ‘bestial’ existence (*NE*: 194). In this way the realm of necessity, of bodily existence, is subordinated to the realm of reason or the soul. Rational life may either be “passive in so far as it follows the dictates of reason, [or] active in so far as it possesses and exercises the power of reasoning” (*NE*: 38), but in either case reason must be exercised by men in order to live a good life.

The ‘good life’, the end to which Aristotle sees men acting, is described in terms of the ‘function of men’:⁴³

⁴² Aristotle (1955)- hereafter referred to as: *NE*.

⁴³ Both Aristotle and Plato share a functional predisposition toward their description of people and their place in society.

(a) The function of a man is the exercise of his non-corporeal faculties or soul in accordance with, or at least not divorced from, a rational principle. (b) The function of the individual and of the *good* individual ... is generically the same, except that we must add superiority in accomplishment to the function... . (c) The function of man is a certain form of life, namely an activity of the soul exercised in combination with rational principle or reasonable ground of action. (d) The function of a good man is to exert such activity well. (e) A function is performed well when performed in accordance with the excellence proper to it (*NE*: 38-39).

This classic formulation of man the rational animal, exercising reason in the pursuit of goodness (however understood) presents a familiar ontology, which forms the basis for Aristotle's discussion of the content of the good life.

Aristotle then discusses the various virtues and vices, noting that most are not so much Socratic binary oppositions, but excesses or deficiencies from an ethical 'mean'. Aristotle describes a series of such virtues and vices (*NE*: 68) which could, in the somewhat quaint language of this translation, be rendered as follows:

DEFICIENCY (VICE)	MEAN (VIRTUE)	EXCESS (VICE)
Injustice ⁴⁴	Justice	-
Cowardice	Courage	Rashness
Meanness	Liberality	Prodigality
Shabbiness	Magnificence	Bad Taste
Poor-Spiritedness	Proper Pride	Vanity
Poor-Spiritedness	Gentleness	Irascibility
Unambitiousness	Proper Ambition ⁴⁵	Ambitiousness
Irony	Truthfulness	Boastfulness
Boorishness	Wittiness	Buffoonery
Surliness	Friendliness	Obsequiousness or Flattery
Shamelessness	Modesty	Shamefacedness
Malice	Righteous Indignation	Envy

⁴⁴ For Aristotle 'justice' is an either/or binary opposition: either one is just or one is unjust (*NE*: 155).

⁴⁵ There is no adequate word to particularise this virtue described by Aristotle, either in Greek or in English. Its closest equivalent may be 'Proper Ambition' (*NE*: 126-127).

Importantly, however, the principal virtues of interest to us here are either binary opposites, or as we will see below, effectively so:

DEFICIENCY (VICE)	MEAN (VIRTUE)	EXCESS (VICE)
Unimpressionability *	Temperance [<i>sophrosyne</i>]	Intemperance
— ⁴⁶	Prudence ⁴⁷ or Practical Wisdom [<i>phronesis</i>]	—
Incontinence [<i>akrasia</i>]	Continence [<i>enkrateia</i>]	Insensitivity *

No doubt one could add to this list but it suffices in that it provides the basic Aristotelian ethical schema. A number of points emerge from this description of virtues and their vices. Firstly, there may be cases where, because the mean is a given, the virtue may not be easily described, as in the example of ‘proper ambition’ (*NE*: 69). Secondly, for some virtues such as justice and *phronesis* (prudence), there may in fact be only a binary opposite because Aristotle could not conceive an improper excess of these qualities. Thirdly, *sophrosyne* (temperance) and *enkrateia* (continence) have effectively only a binary opposite, insofar as one of the ‘deviances’ may occur only rarely, if at all.⁴⁸ It would be

* Aristotle notes these vices are uncommon, although Kennett & Smith (1992) suggest that it is possible to be excessively self-controlled (27-29).

⁴⁶ Aristotle does not provide any characterisation of the vices associated with *phronesis*, although one suspects that, like justice, you either are prudent or you are not.

⁴⁷ Whereas all the above virtues are moral, that is concerning the body, this virtue is intellectual.

⁴⁸ Most of the terms I will be using are self-explanatory English translations of the Greek original. Where there is significant variation among translations in the choice of English equivalent, or where such an ‘equivalent’ may be unclear, I have included an anglicisation of the Greek original. This is particularly the case in the three key ‘repressive’ virtues in the following discussion: *sophrosyne*, *phronesis*, and *enkrateia*.

Sophrosyne, we have met already, and is usually translated as ‘temperance’ or ‘moderation’. *Phronesis* is usually rendered as ‘prudence’, but also as ‘practical wisdom’. The difference is significant, with the latter more accurately reflecting the original meaning of rational intellectual engagement with the practical world.

Enkrateia is sometimes translated as ‘self-control’ but in some older translations, particularly of Aristotle, ‘continence’ or ‘moral strength’ is used instead. The conceptual opposite of ‘self-

rare indeed for someone to be either excessively continent or deficiently temperate. For example “in the pleasures and pains ... the virtue which observes the mean is ‘temperance’ [*sophrosyne*], the excess is the vice of intemperance, [the deficiency] a somewhat rare class and so have not a name assigned to them... we call them unimpressionable” (*NE*: 68).⁴⁹

Contenance-incontenance, temperance-intemperance, and presumably, prudence-imprudence effectively form binary oppositions (*NE*: 215). The interesting point is that these three virtues, *sophrosyne*, *enkrateia*, and *phronesis*, all form the basis for the discussion of the relationship between the potentially rational soul and the passions. They are also at the core of Aristotle’s ethical critique of democracy. These three virtues are the basis of ethical action, and it is to the functioning of these that I now turn.

Both temperance and continence are moral virtues and concern the bodily pleasures (see *NE*: 202 & 215). Prudence, as an intellectual virtue, is concerned with the right functioning of reason (*NE*: 176-192). The three are intimately linked in their concern to oppose their binary opposite. It is interesting to note that Aristotle appears to find it difficult to discuss positively the moral (bodily) virtues of *enkrateia* and *sophrosyne* - he spends most of his time talking about the failures of these virtues: the vices.⁵⁰ He has no such problems with regards to the intellectual virtue, *phronesis*. *Phronesis* is the “rational faculty exercised for the

control’, failure of self-control, was referred to by the Greeks as *akrasia*. This is sometimes translated as ‘weakness of will’, ‘moral weakness’, or in the Aristotelian case mentioned above, as ‘incontenance’. In later philosophical literature, the tendency has been to use the original Greek term for failure of self-control, *akrasia*, but not *enkrateia* for self-control itself. It is useful to note the in-built power relation within the concept of self-control and its opposite. As with all words with the *kratos* root (*enkrateia*, *akrasia*, democracy, aristocracy, theocracy, autocracy, plutocracy etc), the usual translation is ‘government/rule by ...’, although more literally, it could be rendered as ‘power’ in the sense of ‘domination’ or ‘power over’. Thus *enkrateia* could be more accurately translated as ‘power over the self’. It is this sense of domination which underlies the Greek notion of *enkrateia*, and which is not always evident in the notion of ‘government’.

⁴⁹ In Christian morality it may well be argued that the deficiency of temperance becomes no longer a vice but a virtue: asceticism.

⁵⁰ See further: Appendix A.

attainment of truth in things that are humanly good or bad” (NE: 177). It is a deliberative faculty (NE: 176 & 180-184) aimed at revealing “what serves an end” (NE: 184) in human affairs. *Phronesis* enables “us not to be but to become good men” insofar as it “is due to virtue that the end we aim at is right, and it is due to prudence that the means we employ to that end are right” (NE: 188).

Aristotle’s discussion of the difference between continence and temperance is also important. Both virtues are appetitive, referring to the bodily passions *beyond the realm of necessity* (NE: 202-205), that is, “eating and drinking and venery, in short the bodily functions” (NE: 202). Further, those things that are pleasurable, but not necessary, such as “victory, honour and riches” (NE: 202) are also seen in terms of continence and temperance, but as modifications of the purer bodily-based virtues (NE: 203-205). It would appear that continence and temperance, under the guidance of prudence, dictate that the good man knows: the limits of his needs for bodily pleasures; how to achieve and stop receiving these needs; and that, beyond merely knowing how to act in line with this knowledge, he actually *does* it. However, rather than discussing these virtues positively, Aristotle distinguishes them in a discussion of their respective vices, incontinence and intemperance.

Aristotle argues that what distinguishes the intemperate from the incontinent man is really the degree to which incontinent persons are aware of the wrongness of their actions but cannot help themselves, whereas intemperate persons act deliberately, in the full knowledge of the wrongness of their actions (NE: 203). An incontinent person is weak while an intemperate person is indulgent: “The intemperate man deliberately chooses to follow in the train of his lusts from a belief that he ought always to pursue the pleasure of the moment. The incontinent man pursues it too, but has no such belief” (NE: 198). In other words, the intemperate chooses to follow the path of satisfying all passions, the incontinent aims to follow the morally correct path of modest, prudent consumption, but fails:

The good man has ... [by] virtue of his goodness, whether innate or acquired, the habit of thinking rightly about the first principle. Such a man is temperate, while the man who does not know the primary assumptions of all ethics is intemperate. But there is another type - the man who is driven from his considered course of action by a flood of overmastering passion from acting in accordance with that principle, yet not so completely as to make him the kind of man to believe that it is right to abandon himself to such pleasures as he seeks. Such is the incontinent man (*NE*: 213).

Aristotle's underlying analysis is that incontinence is motivated irrational behaviour, which is less morally reprehensible than intemperance, which is just plain wrong (*NE*: 213).

To sum up Aristotle's position on his three key restraining virtues: continence is portrayed as acting in accordance with one's reason; temperance is acting in accordance with an ethical principle; and, prudence is the faculty which rationally formulates ethical principles. If one is continent one must be prudent and vice versa, because the virtue of prudence requires action as well as rational knowledge (*NE*: 216). Temperance relates to not over-indulging the animal appetites: "it is this element or principle which should govern the appetitive part of us" (*NE*: 108). Continence relates to acting in accordance with reason, and not being involuntarily swayed by the irrational passions and desires. These virtues are self-controlling in the sense that they relate to the control of a person's actions to satisfy some other principle. The only real difference is that Aristotle finds different moral conclusions that can be drawn from these activities.

Before closing this section, it is important to note that the virtues and the means by which they were to be generated were more or less immutable across the broad spectrum of Greek ethical thought. As Long and Sedley note this remained the case even in later Stoic philosophy (Long and Sedley 1987: 383). This enabled the Greeks to avoid the question of the source of these virtues. The virtues were simply thought to be immutable *forms*, to use a Socratic term (see *Republic*: 475-541). They were not conceived, for example, as merely the product of cultural habit, but as things with an independent existence on a higher plane.

They were as real and as certain as truth. Because of this view, the individual remains the key to the expression of virtue, but not its source. A knowledgeable individual can only apprehend a virtue, but cannot change it.

The classical paradigm of the virtuous life, therefore, surrounds the issues of the relationship between knowledge, rationality and action, and the relative strength of each. One's actions should be in line with one's reason. One should balance one's needs and wants. Those actions that are beyond the realm of necessity are to be controlled, or else the balance of one's existence will be upset. Both Socrates and Aristotle support such conceptions, disagreeing only in their understanding of the human will: whether it is entirely motivated by rationality (knowledge) (Socrates), or whether it contains irrational elements as well (Aristotle).

We have found that for both Socrates and Aristotle the basis of the argument for realising a good political system is to realise virtue in the citizenry. Virtue is produced when individuals control their public behaviour and act in line with reason and knowledge. This is by no means an easy task. The fundamental criticism of democracy is that it does not allow for the rule of the virtuous over the weak or the ignorant. Instead, in democracy the masses, who are weak or ignorant, are given the power to rule over all. That is why democracy is wrong.

In the above account, it is clear that virtue was normally understood to be a characteristic of one's public behaviour, one's acts, as it were. But does this mean that the passions themselves were viewed as uncontrollable and, therefore, beyond the realm of virtue and vice? Does this, then, render virtue to be the product of a constant struggle of the will or of knowledge to impose itself on the passions?

Insofar as I can tell, this is not satisfactorily dealt with in the works of Plato and Aristotle. On the one hand, the whole ethical structure outlined here, and I would add, in Greek opinion in general, tends to suggest that the passions were

'animal' forces and, therefore, the application to them of human categories of virtue and vice and the techniques of ethical self-control is inappropriate. On the other hand, the passions are sometimes portrayed as things to be controlled in themselves. Aristotle, for example, appears to support the notion of the passions as animal-like when he describes them in terms of an uncontrollable appetite devouring one's capacity for rational self-restraint:

[T]he life of ... intemperate [and incontinent] men, is wholly governed by their desires. ... So if this appetite is not rendered obedient and submissive to authority, it will swell prodigiously. ... The satisfaction of the desire stimulates the innate tendency [to want more] and, when powerful and intense enough, it knocks the sense out of one. For that reason such gratifications should be moderate and rare. They should never clash with the rational element - 'that obedient and chastened principle', as I call it (*NE*: 108).

This quotation suggests that the passions themselves have a certain autonomy, or capacity to govern and grow. The question then is: how to control the passions? One way suggested by Aristotle is to restrain actions consequent upon passions, thereby creating a controlling 'feedback loop'. Socrates, on the other hand, talks of the "control and disdain of the passions" (*Phaedo*: 66). While this could be read as a suggestion that the passions themselves can be understood as being virtuous or *vicious*, the evidence is inconclusive. As we will see, the issue of virtue/vice as they relate to passions/acts is a reoccurring theme in later iterations of democratic theory, particularly as they relate to republican thought.⁵¹

⁵¹ If we follow Foucault (1991a and 1991b) and his ilk, the passions themselves became the subject of virtue/vice judgement in later Christian morality. In this analysis, the passions were potentially as sinful as acts. And passions are much harder to control. Foucault, however, was being too simplistic in suggesting that passion or desire is not a problem for Greeks (Foucault 1991a: 359). Aristotle's and Plato's concerns lie primarily with self-control of actions. For the Greeks, with their orientation towards the public realm, what one knew of a man's passions were manifested in his actions. One did not invade the private realm of the citizen's own soul to see whether or not he was thinking rightly without undermining his autonomy. The passions were products of the irrational part of the soul and it is, therefore, incoherent to expect them to conform to rational standards. However, passions definitely were thought to have causative capacities, so clearly they were a problem. For the Greeks, unlike the Christians, the passions were, to borrow a Foucauldian phrase, beyond the scope of any of 'the techniques of the self' that they had developed:

One cannot care for self without knowledge. The care for self is of course knowledge of self - that is the Socratic-Platonic aspect - but it is also the knowledge of a certain number of rules of conduct and principles (Foucault 1988b: 5).

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that the relationship between the Classical notions of ethics and democracy is very strong. The writings of the Ancient critics show that their reservations regarding democracy revolve around the issue of ethics, and whether the virtuous life is possible in a democracy. Democracy was thought to reflect and reinforce a character type that was antagonistic to virtue. The virtuous life requires a culture of moderation - of ethics. The problem for the critics of Athenian democracy was that democracy in their view worked against such restraint and allowed the passions to rule.

It is clear from the preceding discussion that the forces thought by the Ancient critics to realise the good polity, were restraining forces. The object of restraint was the public actions of individuals. It is unclear whether the motivating forces behind these actions, the passions, would also be the subject of such restraint, but the evidence suggests that they were not. In keeping with the individualistic flavour of Greek thought, restraint of one's actions was thought to be something that one did to oneself. It was given a positive quality of *arete* or virtue. Plato's notion of law as a restraining device extends the capacity for virtue to ignorant individuals, because they will know what constraints they should apply to themselves. External constraints on individuals would be a rare thing in a Platonic utopia, and would result from the individuals' incapacity to apply the laws to themselves.

This chapter has sought to rectify an imbalance present in the historiographical literature by re-establishing a clear link between Greek writings on politics and ethical thought. Rectifying this imbalance is important for its own sake, because

The ethic of the care for the self was a "way of controlling and limiting" relations of power, and it "is the power over self which will regulate the power over others"(Foucault 1988b: 8). Further: "in [the] sexual ethics for the Greeks [the problem] was not between people who prefer women or boys or have sex in one way or another, but was a question of quantity and of activity and passivity. Are you a slave of your own desires or their master?" (Foucault 1991a: 349).

to ignore the link is to distort the purpose behind many of the Classical authors' words. Rectifying the imbalance is also important, as it establishes a vocabulary of virtue that we will find resonates through many later theories of democracy. Virtue is a given in Classical thought; it is democracy that is problematic. The question, therefore, is not: whether democracy requires the cultivation of virtue?; but rather: should democracy be rejected because it undermines virtue? Curiously, the vocabulary of virtue produced by self-restraint, which we have seen was vital to the critique of Greek democracy, becomes a vital plank in later theories of democracy. Virtue for many democratic theorists is the means by which democracy is to be realised. For the next attempts to address this issue, I now turn to the literature on republicanism.

CHAPTER THREE

The Ancient and the Modern: Republican Democratic Theory*

[The skilful politician] agreed with the rest to call everything which, without regard to the public, man should commit to gratify any of his appetites VICE if in that action there could be observed the least prospect that it might either be injurious to any of the society, or ever render himself less serviceable to others; and to give the name of VIRTUE to every performance by which man, contrary to the impulse of nature, should endeavour the benefit of others, or the conquest of his own passions out of a rational ambition of being good (Mandeville 1986).

Ancient democracy ended effectively with the demise of the Roman Republic. The republican form of democracy and democratic theory was ‘rediscovered’ in the late Middle Ages. The Italian city-republics spawned renewed theoretical as well as practical interest in the issues of realising a self-governing community. Modern ‘republicanism’, a loose set of ideas and principles, can be traced to this interest. This interest has been an abiding one, linking the early Italian theorists through Machiavelli, Harrington, Rousseau and the American republicans, to theorists of the late twentieth century, such as Arendt, Pocock, Skinner and Pettit.

This chapter examines the issue of realisation in republican democratic theory. This is an issue that weighed heavily on the minds of republican democratic theorists, but is not accorded sufficient prominence in the historiographical literature. In structure, this chapter will firstly address the threshold issue of whether “republicanism” can indeed be said to be a separate strand of political theory. The discussion of this topic will draw upon works inspired by the recent revival of interest in ‘republicanism’. It will be argued that in these works there is a body of theory clustered under the title ‘republicanism’ that shares sufficient

* Parts of this chapter have been published in *Political Theory Newsletter* (see Clarke 1994).

commonality in terms of the problems they regard as important, and the solutions they propose to solve these problems, to warrant separate consideration. Secondly, the historiographical literature's account of republican democratic theory will be outlined. This will highlight that the republican definition and justification of democracy can, with a little effort, be extracted from the historiographical literature. This is not the case with the issue of the republican concern for the realisation of the republic, which does not appear in the historiographical literature at all.

Thirdly, we will turn an in-depth examination of republican democratic theory. To make sense of what is a fairly loose conglomeration of thinkers, the major distinctive themes of republican thought, liberty, stability, community and virtue, and their relation to democracy will be addressed. The political and ethical theory of Jean-Jacques Rousseau will be used to bind together the discussion of republican theory. The purpose is to lead us to a point from which we can focus attention on the means by which republican thinkers, both historical and contemporary, see their preferred form of political arrangement being realised.

Civic virtue will emerge as the critical theme in this discussion. Civic virtue appears to be a primary concern of early republicans because it contributes to the survival of the polity by ensuring stability. It is a tool for realising republican democracy, *par excellence*. An in-depth examination of the works of Jean-Jacques Rousseau will be used to show that in building a vision of republican democracy, ancient notions of virtue are blended with entirely modern concerns. These lead early modern republicans to significantly different outcomes when compared with their Ancient predecessors. Latter-day republicans have other reasons for extolling the benefits of civic virtue. These reasons derive from their concern with the concept of 'community'. It will be argued towards the end of the chapter, however, that persons claiming the mantle of republicanism ought to be judged in terms of the whole republican 'package' of theory, and not just the

bits that they like. There is much in the republican ‘package’ that may not be appealing to recent republicans. Importantly, it is problematic whether the unappealing parts of the republican legacy can be divorced from the whole package, without significantly undermining the credibility of the claim to the ‘republican’ mantle.

Defining republicanism

This chapter argues that the historiographical literature touches on the republican definition and justification of democracy, but is largely silent on the issue of realisation. Before proceeding to redress this imbalance, however, it is important to dwell for a moment on the question of the identity of ‘republicanism’. As we will see, many historians of democratic theory do not give republicanism a separate identity, but rather tend to incorporate it into the development of liberal political theory. On the other hand, it is clear from the existence of this chapter, that republicanism is accorded separate status in this thesis. This is because republicans share a position on the realisation of democracy that distinguishes them from liberal theorists. Thus, while the issue of separateness of republicanism, *as a whole*, may be arguable, on the issue of the realisation of democracy there is much merit in assuming the existence of a distinct republican theoretical position.

So what is ‘republicanism’, and is it really different from other political theories? There is no clear answer to this question both in the primary and secondary literature on it. For a start, the term ‘republicanism’ is by no means universally used. Alternative descriptors used in the secondary literature on ‘republicanism’ include civic republicanism, classical republicanism, civic humanism, country ideology, conservatism and numerous subsets of these: Harvard republicanism, St Louis republicanism, labour republicanism and artisan

republicanism etc.⁵² While it may be that some of these terms refer to identifiably unique concepts or models of political organisation, precisely which ones these are is not clear.

The role of 'republicanism' is also the subject of debate. There is divergence over whether the concept has, or legitimately ought to have, prescriptive capacities for contemporary society, or whether it should be used only in matters of historiography (Isaac 1990: 461-462). The former can be seen in the surge in writings on the implications of republicanism for a legal system more attuned to the discourse of individual rights and common law remedy than to republican themes of community, responsibility and virtue. This in turn is linked to an association between communitarian philosophy and republicanism.⁵³

For the purposes of this thesis, I propose to use a general description of 'republicanism' which associates the thinking of a number of key historical figures with a number of key distinguishing theoretical concerns. Isaac's Pocock-inspired description of republicanism is particularly useful in this regard:

The term refers to a view of politics that draws its inspiration from the classical ideals of ancient Greece and Rome and emphasizes the primacy of civic virtue and public participation in social life. Republicanism exalts, in the words of Pocock, "a way of life given over to civic concerns and the ultimately political activity of citizenship". As a consequence of Pocock's pathbreaking historiography, this discourse has come to be associated with a virtual canon that includes Aristotle, Cicero, Polybius, Machiavelli, Harrington, Burgh, Rousseau and Jefferson (Isaac 1990: 463).⁵⁴

This chapter will be limited to discussing republicans of the modern period, as the previous chapter has discussed Classical thought in some detail. The key concerns of republicanism identified by Isaac are therefore: civic virtue, public

⁵² See: Christodoulidis (1993), Gey (1993), Isaac (1988), Rodgers (1992) and Sherry (1995).

⁵³ See for example: Barnouw (1980), Beiner (1990), Cohen (1996), Lawrence (1989) Galston (1994), Gey (1993), Habermas (1994), Nelson (1987), Pangle (1990a), Pangle (1990b), Sherry (1995), Sunstein (1990a), Sunstein (1990b), and Williams (1994).

⁵⁴ Isaac is quoting (Pocock 1975: 56).

(political) participation by citizens, and community. These, as we will see, are all linked. To this general description, I would add three additional themes: the post-Renaissance concern with the “instability of political institutions” (Shapiro 1990: 436; and Pocock 1975: 77-78); an enriched, if not settled, understanding of liberty; and a relationship with the notion of democracy.

Is republicanism really different from other political theories? “The opposition between liberalism and republicanism”, Haakonssen writes, “while a source of inspiration for the recent revival of the latter, is more an invention of this revival than ascertainable historical fact” (Haakonssen 1993: 571). Haakonssen is raising a threshold question about whether the body of thought called ‘republicanism’ really is an independent theory in its own right, or whether it is merely a variant of, or precursor to, liberal or other thought. Haakonssen is of the latter view, and he is not alone in doubting the strength or even existence of this opposition.⁵⁵

In suggesting that the identity of republicanism lies in its opposition to liberalism, an important fact is overlooked: republicanism, however defined, *predates* liberal political theory by hundreds of years. It could not, in its original formulation, have been created in opposition to something that did not exist. It is not even clear whether republicanism gained its original meaning from an opposition to anything; however, republicanism was by definition in competition with other non-popular forms of political organisation, notably monarchical, aristocratic and theocratic forms.

To be fair, however, the point made by Haakonssen *et al* is provoked not by the origins of republicanism, but its recent revival. This revival has been inspired by what Hirsch terms the “*threnody* of contemporary liberalism” (Hirsch 1986:

⁵⁵ For example, see: Habermas (1994), Isaac (1988 and 1990), Shapiro (1990) and Sherry (1995).

423).⁵⁶ Two arguments are proposed, firstly that liberalism is either said to have run its course and people are searching for alternatives, or secondly, that liberalism's history of itself has been re-examined and found wanting. Isaac for example argues that:

Political theory is in crisis ... [S]ome long-standing and prevalent assumptions are under fire ... [from] the new history of political thought, which has undermined the traditional canon of political theory, and challenged our self-understandings about the historical character and significance of liberalism in the modern world (Isaac 1988: 349).

Shapiro argues that: "A central fact of our time is the exhaustion of liberalism and Marxism both as philosophical systems and as political ideologies" (Shapiro 1990: 433). Republicanism, for Shapiro, is a product of this environment of theoretical exhaustion. Thus it could be argued that the modern revival of republicanism could be said to be in opposition, or more accurately, in *response* to contemporary liberalism and its perceived failings.

There is a deeper point that has been made in relation to republicanism, namely that the 'liberalism' to which recent republicans claim to be responding is something of a caricature. Both Shapiro and Isaac criticise contemporary 'republicans', whom they identify with communitarianism, as having unjustifiably defined 'liberalism' purely as an individualist, negative-liberty, rights-based political theory in which 'republican' notions of community, virtue and positive liberty could hold no sway (see Shapiro 1990: 448-453 and Isaac 1988). Isaac argues that the 'liberal' "language of rights" and the 'republican/communitarian' "language of virtue" are in reality "both component parts of an integral liberal ideology" (Isaac 1988: 376). The problem, as Isaac sees it, is that some recent liberals have lost touch with the latter 'language', and communitarians have responded to this by adopting a "residual idiom" (the

⁵⁶ My emphasis. *Threnody*: a Greek dramatic term for "song of lamentation or dirge" (Hirsch 1986: 444f).

republican language of virtue) without realising that this had already been incorporated into the liberal lexicon (Isaac 1988: 376-377).

Shapiro argues that Pocock, who has done much to revive interest in the idea of republicanism, creates an opposition between liberalism and republicanism that is a “mutual opposition of gross concepts” (Shapiro (1990: 451). “When protagonists argue in terms of gross concepts”, he writes,

they engage in a double reduction. First, they reduce what are actually complex relational ideas to one or another of the terms in the relation over which they range, dealing with other terms implicitly while seeming not to deal with them at all. Second, they reduce what are often substantive disagreements about one or another of the terms in a relational argument to disagreements about the meanings of the terms themselves, making a self-fulfilling prophecy out of the “essential contestability” thesis (Shapiro 1990: 451).

Shapiro thus believes that liberals and republicans, “are both right about one another”, in the sense that they have each adopted particular terms as their own, forcing the debate to be one about the “terminologies in which arguments are expressed, rather than the arguments themselves” (Shapiro 1990: 452-453).

Does this mean that we should abandon the term ‘republicanism’ because it rests on a false opposition to liberalism? My reading of the above arguments is that no-one is suggesting that ‘republicanism’ in its early forms did not constitute a separate theory from its rivals. The issue rather is whether recent theorists who have recently adopted the language of ‘republicanism’ in an assault on liberalism fully understand the import of what they are doing, either in terms of the morally unsavoury practical *consequences* of some historical republican practices, or that liberals have in fact adopted many historically republican notions.

As a consequence, it would be uncontroversial to discuss early republicanism as an independent doctrine, as I will do below, but the linkage between this and recent works will be more problematic, and is something that will be touched upon toward the end of this chapter. The principle adopted for this chapter is that because the recent authors adopt the language of historical republicanism, they

ought to be judged in terms of the whole republican ‘package’. Like Shapiro, I suspect that many contemporary authors would be uncomfortable with the consequences of the republican package of thought, although some would acknowledge, accept and even celebrate it.⁵⁷ Thus my strategy is to approach republicanism in its own terms, with a focus on the theme of this thesis, namely how the realisation of republican democracy was theorised.

The historiographical literature on republican democratic theory

The range of histories of democratic theory on offer grows substantially once we turn to more recent exponents of democratic theory than those of Ancient Greece. Many authors, whether consciously or not, appear to have heeded Finley’s warning about reading too much theory into Athenian democratic practice by simply commencing their narratives at a later time.⁵⁸ The uncertainty that typifies the historian’s accounts of Athenian democratic ‘theory’ *qua* theory disappears with the rise of an abundant theoretical source literature in early modern Europe.

There is an apparent three-fold division in modern democratic theory, as presented in the historiographical literature. This division mirrors Macpherson’s argument in relation to the political theories that justify a particular kind of society and its political institutions. These are: “the individualist-liberal theory, whose roots are generally traced back to Locke; the socialist theory, whose roots are essentially in Marx; and the populist general-will theory, whose roots lie in Rousseau” (Macpherson 1973: 224). This division appears to match well the

⁵⁷ As I argue below, the communitarian use of the language of republicanism is an example of the former. So, indeed, is the use of Rousseau’s thought by participatory theorists, such as Pateman (1970). Arendt would be an example of the latter (see Arendt 1958, 1970 a and b, and 1977. See also Clarke 1990).

⁵⁸ For example: Lipson (1964), Pennock (1979) and Rejai (1967) all acknowledge democracy’s Classical roots, but start the ‘history’ of democratic theory in the modern era.

development of democratic theory in the period spanning the sixteenth to twentieth centuries. The account that follows uses this division; however, for the sake of historical precedence, Macpherson's last form of theory, the 'populist general-will', or as it will be termed here, republican theory, will be discussed first, followed by the liberal democratic theory, and lastly by socialist theory.

This section outlines the historiographical literature's account of republican democratic theory. On the whole, republican democratic theory is presented rather cursorily in the historiographical literature as a movement that was prominent up until the end of the eighteenth century, but subsequently surpassed by the twin forces of liberalism and socialism. The historians often do not identify a body of literature called 'republicanism', preferring instead to integrate it, and its major figures, Machiavelli, Harrington, Rousseau, and the American republicans into the general development of modern democratic theory, and liberal democratic theory in particular. This is unfortunate because, as we will see, there is much in the republican model that sits uncomfortably with liberal democratic theory, particularly in relation to their understanding of how the democratic republic is to be realised.

As a consequence of the lack of differentiation in the historiographical literature between republicanism and other democratic theory, what follows is, to a certain extent, an 'archaeological' reconstruction of the historiographical literature's account of republican democratic theory. This account is strongly focussed on the republican definition and justification of democracy and democratic practices. There is virtually no discussion of the issue of the realisation of democracy, despite, as we will see, it being one of the central preoccupations of republicanism.

The key features of republican democratic theory, as discussed in the historiographical literature, revolve around four central concepts: the idea of the self-governing community; liberty; the value and conditions of participation; and

the popular, or general will. Each of these was initially developed in the Italian city-states around the turn of the twelfth century, with subsequent developments including the theoretical high points in the form of Machiavelli in the early sixteenth century, and Rousseau in the eighteenth century. There remains a strong current of republican thought in recent times. This current contains both 'classical' republican thinkers such as Arendt, Wolin, and more recently Skinner and Pettit, and more problematically, 'communitarian' thinkers.⁵⁹

While the language of republican theory tends to be used in the historiographical literature, and in this thesis, as directly applicable to an account of the history of democratic theory, it should be noted that both the Italian republicans and Rousseau separated their positive notion of the 'republic' from a negative view of 'democracy'. Skinner ascribes the republican ambivalence toward democracy to the influence of Aristotle's view that 'democracy' was a 'perverted' form of the ideal type of government.⁶⁰ The early republicans saw democracy as a form of 'mob rule', in contrast with orderly, virtuous republican self-government. Skinner goes on to note, however, that the republican tradition "engendered a rich political literature in which a number of arguments in favour of government by the people were articulated for the first time in post-classical thought" (Skinner 1992: 59-60). Thus, while the Italian republicans may have disassociated their political system from 'democracy' as they understood it, the terms and arguments that they used relate directly to the general field that could be termed 'democratic theory'.

As with the Greek concept of the *polis*, the principal republican political body is the community, capable by its size and sufficient social homogeneity, of being

⁵⁹ See my discussion of 'communitarianism' later in this chapter.

⁶⁰ See Chapter Two.

organised to govern itself in a relatively direct fashion. Skinner quotes Latini, who wrote in 1266, that in the Italian city-states, the people:

are able to choose those who will act most profitably for the common good of the city and all their subjects ... [In general] there are three types of government, one being rule by Kings, the second rule by leading men and, the third rule by communities themselves. And of these the third is far better than the others (Latini in Skinner 1992: 61-62).

Self-government was seen as most likely to result in a balance of the interests of rival groupings in a community, thus avoiding the self-destructing nature of factional rule (Held 1987: 45). Involvement by a citizenry creates a commitment both to the products of democratic deliberation and a commitment to the process itself. Self-government therefore promotes the stability of the state, and this, according to Held, allowed Machiavelli the means to justify combining *virtú* (rule of law and religious worship) with an expansionist foreign policy (Held 1987: 45-46). Both these devices would help dampen the destructive forces of factionalism in the self-governing community while maintaining the conditions that promote liberty.

Individual liberty, a concept of dubious merit in the eyes of the Athenian critics, is a central preoccupation of the republican theories presented in the historiographical literature. You will recall that in the eyes of the Athenian critics, especially Plato, liberty equated with individual licence, and democracy was the political extension of a society that pursues liberty as a primary goal. Similarly, for republicans, liberty is not just a product of the republican mode of government, it is constitutive of it. Unlike the Ancient critics, however, liberty was regarded by the republican theorists as a justification of their system, rather than a reason for rejecting it.⁶¹ Citizens exercising their freedom secure greatness

⁶¹ There is some debate as to whether republican liberty should be described as 'negative' or 'positive', or as something in-between. If it is to be the first, then republican liberty is a condition produced by non-interference, and is thus indistinguishable from the notion of liberty associated with liberal theory. If republican liberty is more properly seen as 'positive', then it is related to the development of capacities within citizens to be able to perform acts. As such it is more akin to the notion of liberty associated with socialist thought. Pettit, however, has suggested that

and stability for the state (Skinner 1992: 65-67). In other words, it was argued that only in a Republic can the individual achieve maximum liberty, and a society of individuals exercising, *as equals*, their liberty, will as a consequence be a great society (see Held 1987: 76).⁶²

The shift toward liberty is seen by some historians of democratic theory as marking an important shift in the theoretical relationship between the individual, society, and the political form of the state. Whereas the Greeks saw political institutions as a reflection of social values the republicans are presented as starting the process by which political theorists shifted focus from society to the citizen. This citizen occupies a space both in the private realm of the household and the public (civic) realm (see Lipson 1964: 53). This shift is, of course, more highly developed in later liberal political theory.

In what is seen as a consequence of the high value placed on liberty, the historiographical literature notes that participation in the political process was also highly valued by the republicans. Liberty was intrinsically linked to democratic self-government, and this rested on activities that shored up liberty:

the exercise of political power was not only a citizen's way to protect himself against the abuse of power by others, and not only the means by which (private) interests were aggregated, it was also the means by which a citizen broadened his interests and made them harmonious with those of his fellow-citizens (Pennock 1979: 129).

This 'harmonisation' of private interests through political participation by equals provides a clue, unfortunately not pursued by the historians of democratic theory, to the way in which republicans theorised the realisation of republican democracy.

republican liberty be described as a particular type of negative liberty, namely 'resilient' non-interference. See Appendix B for further discussion of Pettit's theory.

⁶² Liberty was also dependent on the concept of civic virtue, which despite being central to Republican thought, barely rates a mention in the historiographical literature. One exception is Krouse (1983). See the discussion below for a fuller analysis of virtue in the Republic.

The historians of democratic theory do not tell us much about how republicans thought that the harmonisation of private interests might be brought about. If they did, they would tell us how republicans thought to realise democracy. Instead the historians turn their focus to the outcome of this process, the popular or General Will. This Will differs from a mere aggregation of individual wills, because it expresses the 'real' interests of the community as a whole. Liberals, it is argued, view the popular will at its most simple, as an aggregation of individual (particular) wills, whereas republicans see it as something much more. Like Aristotle, the early republicans theorised that laws made by many minds are likely to be better than those made by fewer minds, and that the act of involvement in such judgement was likely to engender a sense of commitment to the final product (Skinner 1992: 62).

Rousseau is presented as most fully developing a notion of the General Will; however, there is in the historiographical literature, a general view that Rousseau's ideas in this regard and in relation to democracy lead him to be a libertarian-authoritarian figure, if such a figure is possible. The General Will is the "publicly generated conception of the common good [which is] the sum of judgements about the common good [and not] ... the mere aggregate of personal fancies and individual desires" (Held 1987: 76). The popular or General Will is, in this sense, created by participative citizens who 'step outside' their individuality and make deliberations on what would be best for the whole community. This popular will is then binding on the participants (Lipson 1964: 52).

And who are the participants? In the Italian Republics citizenship was limited to adult, resident men, who owned taxable property and who "had been born there or at least resided continuously for a number of years" (Skinner 1992: 60). This represents a more exclusive franchise than that found in the Athenian *polis*, which did not formally limit citizenship to people who own property. The republican

property-based franchise ensured, by exclusion, a kind of economic equality among the republican citizens.

Republican citizenship was not only economically restricted, it was also gender restricted both in practice and in theory. While Phillips notes that of all the democratic theoretical traditions “republicanism looks the most impervious to gender” (1991: 49), and that the apparently neutral ‘citizen’ is necessarily gendered. Rousseau certainly theorised women out of the citizenry by associating them with the “lesser virtues of love and affection, regarding them as ‘naturally’ unsuited to the demands of justice, and best kept safely at home” (Phillips 1991: 30).

At a more theoretical level, Phillips also notes that the elevated public sphere that is so important to the republican ideal has been criticised by many feminists as intrinsically masculine because of a hierarchy of dualisms associated with the public/private dichotomy. This ultimately leads Hartsock, for example, to argue that masculinity is defined in opposition to all that is private (feminine) and is, therefore, intrinsically linked to the public realm of the masculine republican citizen.⁶³

As noted above, the historiographical literature tends to absorb the republican theoretical tradition into the developmental phase of ‘modern’ democratic theory.⁶⁴ As we have seen, however, the republican definition and justification of democracy can, to a certain extent, be extracted from the historiographical literature. In the case of the distinctive way in which republicans theorise the realisation of democracy, there is nothing in the histories to extract. In a repetition of the tendency noted in Chapter Two, the works of the early modern

⁶³ See: Elshtain (1974) and Phillips 1991: 50.

⁶⁴ See for example: Hattersley (1930), Held (1987), Lipson (1964), Mayo (1960), Pennock (1979) and Rejai (1967).

republicans, such as Machiavelli and Rousseau, are read as if they were merely political tracts. As with their Classical predecessors, however, republican democratic theory contains a powerful ethical component. To ignore republican discussions of ‘civic virtue’, as the historians tend to do,⁶⁵ is to ignore the principal tool that republicans use to realise democracy, as well as disregarding one of the major distinguishing features of republican political theory. This chapter seeks to redress this imbalance.

Clarifying the republican theory of democracy

The remainder of this chapter is about how republicans theorise the realisation of democracy. In order to arrive at an understanding of how they do this, we need to place the principal features of the republican democratic ‘package’ in context. This context, it will be argued, drives republicans to approach the realisation of democracy in a distinctive manner. The work of Jean-Jacques Rousseau will be examined in depth, to tease out how he arrives at his position on the realisation of republican democracy. Where there is significant variance among republicans from Rousseau’s position on these issues, they will be discussed concurrently.

The argument of this section can be summarised as follows: most republicans regard democracy as the best form of government. Many early modern republicans had, however, concerns about its realisability. Their concern arose from the view that all forms of polity are unstable and, because of its special characteristics, democracy is the most vulnerable of all to the forces of change. Unlike other forms of government, which can enforce stability through a range of impersonal repressive tools, republicans find democracy limited in its tools for maintaining internal stability. Civic virtue is the primary means by which a

⁶⁵ Skinner (1992) and Krouse (1983) are exceptions to this tendency. Their works, however, do not locate the republican notion of civic virtue in a continuous history of the idea of realising democracy, as this thesis does.

republican democracy can try to ameliorate the forces of change and ensure the stability of the republic. Civic virtue is seen in the individual as self-controlled behaviour. Civic virtue is, it is argued, an amalgam of earlier Greek views and Christian morality, but the reasons for using it are entirely modern.

The republican 'package' includes, I argue, concerns to do with the meaning and value of democracy, the inherent instability of political institutions, civic virtue, participation, community and the meaning of liberty. The first four concerns most occupied the minds of the early modern republicans and, as such, will be covered in our study of Rousseau. The last two features of the republican 'package' gain greater importance in recent republican work at the expense of some of the earlier concerns. This is particularly the case in relation to institutional instability and, to a lesser extent, civic virtue. These two features, which are vital to understanding the republican theoretical position on realising democracy, are also the reasons why many recent 'republicans' should feel uncomfortable with their chosen theoretical lineage, in terms of its baggage and its consequences.

You will recall that the early Italian republicans eschewed using the term 'democracy' to describe their preferred polity, tainted as the term was by the criticisms of the Ancient Greek authorities. In addition there was, throughout the period up until the Federalist Debates, a rivalry between democratic and 'aristocratic' republicanism. How, then, on both counts, can we claim that republicanism is linked to the democratic political form? The answer lies in two points: firstly, there is the question of the meaning of democracy; and secondly, there is a distinction to be drawn between the reality of aristocratic republican governments and the theory of democratic republicanism. I will now touch on the latter before turning my attention to the meaning of democracy in republican thought. This will provide us with the tools for considering how republicans theorise the realisation of republican democracy.

Republicanism entails more than the simple anti-monarchical sentiment that Morrow ascribes to William Godwin (Minnow 1991: 651), but does it mean that democracy alone is the ‘best’ form of republican government? Most republicans would argue that the *consequence* of republican ideals leads to the view that concentration of political power in the hands of a single person or small group of persons is inappropriate. Republicanism in this view is democratic. This was not always the case in historical practice.

The issue of aristocratic versus democratic republicanism is one that was important up until the mid-nineteenth century, when the latter triumphed. Carrithers notes that Machiavelli, Montesquieu, de Tocqueville and the American Federalists, were all concerned about this issue, and all favoured the democratic form (Carrithers 1991: 245-248). It is intriguing that the ‘greats’ of the republican tradition have favoured democracy, while the practice of republicanism in Europe up until the mid-eighteenth century, had been to concentrate power in the hands of an hereditary aristocracy (Carrithers 1991: 267). However, as this thesis is about the theory of democracy and the theory of its practice, the fact that reality did not coincide with theory is only of minor interest.

That the historical authors favoured democratic over aristocratic forms is clear. For example, Machiavelli in his *Discourses*, distinguishes between republics in which the “caretakers of liberty” are the demos and those in which they are the aristocracy.⁶⁶ His argument is that the former will lead a republic to greatness and empire (as in the case of Rome), while the latter may lead a state to remain small, but relatively stable (as in the case of Sparta and Venice) (Machiavelli 1979a: 185-188). He seems to be asking: Is it not better to be great than small? In any case, he argues, the aristocratic republics will ultimately be the subject of great

⁶⁶ Machiavelli (1979a) “Discourses on the First Ten Books of Titus Livius” - first published in 1531. Hereafter referred to as *Discourses*.

internal disturbance, as the 'haves' seek to defend their wealth and privilege, while the 'have-nots' will ferment revolt:

either in order to get revenge on the rich by taking their property away or in order to be able themselves to acquire the riches and offices which they see used so badly by others (*Discourses*: 188).

Certainly republicans regard the stability brought about by aristocratic rule as a positive consequence. Montesquieu argued as such, (Carrithers (1991: 267), but insisted that aristocracy remains imperfect when compared with democracy:

the more an aristocracy borders on democracy, the more it approaches perfection; and in proportion as it draws towards monarchy, the more it is imperfect (Montesquieu quoted in Carrithers 1991: 248).

Interestingly, Harrington was, according to Coats and Pocock, also primarily a democrat, because despite having argued for a kind of representative aristocracy, this was an administrative convenience designed to formulate the issues that the people would resolve (Coats 1994: 23-24 and Pocock 1977: 43).

Rousseau was quite prepared to countenance non-democratic republics, but he also thought that democracy was the 'perfect' form of government.⁶⁷ He distinguishes between republicanism as the rule of public interest and the various governmental forms:

I therefore give the name 'Republic' to every State that is governed by laws, no matter what the form of administration may be: for only in such a case does the public interest govern, and the *res publica* rank as a *reality*. Every legitimate government is republican. ... I understand by this word, not merely an aristocracy or democracy, but generally any government directed by the general will, which is the law. To be legitimate, the government must be, not one with the Sovereign, but its minister. In such a case even a monarchy is a Republic (Rousseau 1973e: 212 - original emphasis, includes footnote from manuscript).

Thus we can have non-democratic republics, but as we will now see, they will not be as perfect. They may, however, be more realisable.

⁶⁷ See Rousseau (1973e: 239-240).

As we have already seen, the early Italian republicans understood ‘democracy’ to be something like ‘mob rule’ (Skinner 1992: 59-60). Following the Aristotelian classification of political systems, they understood the ideal form of government to be along the lines of a blend of oligarchy (wealth and excellence) and democracy (freedom and equality) (Politics: IV (1293b 34-35). Later republicans were less tied to the Greek prejudice against ‘democracy’ and were, as we will see, more comfortable in claiming democracy for their own. The problem is mostly one of antipathy to a title rather than to its substance. *In effect* the early participative self-governing Italian republics were democratic republics if one applies the definition of democracy used by later republicans such as Rousseau.

Republicans use ‘democracy’ to describe a political arrangement in which active, participative citizens are directly involved in the process of community self-government. Representative democracy, even for recent ‘republicans’, is second best. Sunstein, for example, refers to the American town-meeting model as the enduring archetype for republican democracy:

To the [early American] republicans, the role of politics was above all deliberative. Dialogue and discussion among the citizenry were critical features in the governmental process. Political participation was not limited to voting or other simple statements of preference. The ideal model for governance was the town meeting, a metaphor that played an explicit role in the republican understanding of politics (Sunstein 1985: 31).

Rousseau provides us with a good outline of the republican notion of democracy, despite his thought being notoriously complex and not necessarily very democratic. This man who, on the one hand, praises the direct, popular republican democracy of Geneva, in the dedication to the *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*,⁶⁸ (the ‘Second Discourse’) where “the Sovereign and the people were one and the same” (Rousseau 1973a: 33), also claims in the *Social*

⁶⁸ Rousseau (1973a) - first published in 1755.

Contract that, “there has never been a real democracy and there never will be. ... Were there a people of gods, their government would be democratic. So perfect a government is not for men” (Rousseau 1973e: 239-240).

What does Rousseau mean by ‘democracy’? The *Social Contract*⁶⁹ provides us with the tools by which we can understand his views on democracy. It stands as one of the great works of eighteenth century political philosophy. Originally conceived as a much larger work, *Political Institutions*, it presents in a most un-Rousseauian style, a terse and often dry analysis of the structure of the human polity. Democracy *per se* occupies only two pages of the one hundred and forty page document. The two pages themselves are not those that excite the greatest interest among democratic theorists. Rather, it is his remarkable model of political society, the legislator, the Sovereign, the people, the Prince, and above all the General Will, which are most important. Taken together, we have a picture of political and social life which, if it all worked perfectly, would result in democracy. As we shall see, however, when we discuss the republican concept of institutional instability, it becomes understandable that democracy as Rousseau sees it, is generally too perfect and too vulnerable to survive.

The *Social Contract* is fundamentally a discussion of the political institutional form, with particular concerns regarding the various roles, duties, rights, and spheres of action of the component parts identified with the human polity. As such, it resembles Locke’s second *Treatise on Government*, Montesquieu’s *Spirit of the Laws*, even Aristotle’s *Politics*. As a general theme therefore, it is not particularly novel. It is what Rousseau does with his themes of political institutions which are of interest. They are tied directly to his overall philosophical structure, and as democracy figures strongly among these institutions, they are of importance here.

⁶⁹ Rousseau (1973e) - first published in 1762.

Rousseau uses a complex mathematical analogy to define democracy by distinguishing it from an absolute concentration of repressive force in the hands of one person (a monarch), and from the concentration of repressive force in the hands of a few (an aristocracy). Democracy entails the absolute diffusion of repressive force in the hands of all.

The structure of Rousseau's analysis of political institutions is complex and rather jargonistic. The *Body Politic* (Rousseau 1974: 424) or *Legislative* (Rousseau 1973e: 229) is formed by a social contract. This body, when passive he refers to as the *State*, when active as the *Sovereign*, and when amongst equals (other bodies politic) as a *Power*. The people, when viewed as a collectivity forming the body politic, he refers to as a *Nation*, individual members of the state as *Citizens*, and, in their relationship to the sovereign, as *Subjects*. The principal form that concerns us here, the *Sovereign*, can, as it is formed by the General Will, only act through that will, and therefore can only act equally with respect to all people (Rousseau 1974: 425).

Because the *Sovereign* can only make general principles or laws, an intermediary body, or *Executive* (Rousseau 1973e: 229), is required to turn these into specific policies. The members of the executive are *Magistrates*, *Kings*, or *Rulers*. Rousseau refers to the *Executive*, in its relation to its members, as a *Prince*, and in its actions, it is *Government* (Rousseau 1974: 426-427). The interrelationship between the component parts is crucial: if any part of this structure acts contrary to its allotted place, the whole system will collapse:

If the sovereign tries to govern, and if the prince wants to make laws, or if the subject refuses to obey them, disorder takes the place of order, and the state falls to pieces under despotism or anarchy (Rousseau 1974: 427).

Rousseau describes the 'double relationship' between the *Legislative* in the form of the *Sovereign*, the *Executive* in the form of *Government*, and the people in the form of the *Nation* in mathematical terms. This relationship is one of relative

repressive force. In the *Social Contract*, the relationship is described as a 'continuous proportion', that takes the form:

$$a:b::b:c$$

(where 'a' is the *Sovereign*, 'b' is the *Government*, and 'c' is the *Nation*).

This could also be expressed as:

$$a/b=b/c.$$

Rousseau assumes that the variable 'a' can be quantified as population size, and the variable 'b' as the number of *Magistrates*. Logically enough, 'c' will always be a constant, having the value of 1, as there never could be more or less than one *Nation* or people having an internal relationship with itself (Rousseau 1973e: 232).

As mathematics, this continuous proportion is a bit limited, which Rousseau acknowledges (Rousseau 1973e: 232), but the point of Rousseau's argument is that it describes a relative repressive relationship where: '/' or ':' could be said to refer to 'repressive force', and '::' or '=' could be read as 'determines'.⁷⁰ The relative concentration of 'b' determines the degree to which repressive force is used by 'b' (Rousseau 1974: 429). Thus the relative repressive force of 'a' (the *Sovereign*) over 'b' (the *Government*), determines the relative repressive force of 'b' (the *Government*) over 'c' (the *Nation*). The repressive relationship varies according to the size of the two variables: 'a' and 'b'. It is not possible for 'b' to be larger than 'a'; however, it would be technically possible for them to be equal. Thus as the a/b relationship gets closer to 1, either because 'a' has decreased, 'b' has increased or both, the relative repressive force of 'b' over 'c' decreases toward

⁷⁰ Rousseau distinguishes between repressive force and power. Power is a constant, being the value of 'a', and is produced by the General Will.

the absolute: 1 (total equality). Conversely, where the a/b relationship approaches the value of 'a' (because 'b' has approached its absolute minimum: 1), the relative repressive force of 'b' over 'c' increases towards the value of 'a'.

The relationship between the individual and the *Sovereign* is a simple proportion of 1:a. When 'a' is small the influence of the individual is relatively greater than when 'a' is large (Rousseau 1973e: 231, and 1974: 427). Thus Rousseau argues that “the greater the disproportion between private wishes and general will, *ie*, between manners and laws, the greater must be the power of repression” (Rousseau 1974: 427), or put more simply “the larger the State, the less the liberty” (Rousseau 1973e: 231) and “the more numerous the magistrates, the weaker the government” (Rousseau 1974: 428).

The mathematical analogy provides Rousseau with the grounds for distinguishing the various institutional forms of the *Executive* and determining their relative merits. He identifies three institutional form of the *Executive*. Like Aristotle, Rousseau regards monarchy and aristocracy as legitimate governmental forms, but whereas the Macedonian had regarded democracy as a 'perversion', the Genevan finds it to be the best, if least likely, governmental structure. I will only briefly outline the first two, as they do not concern me greatly here, and will focus primarily upon the last, democracy.

Monarchy is the “strongest” (Rousseau 1973e:238) institutional form of the *Executive* insofar as it is simple, and the lines of authority are very clear. But in this very strength lies the seeds of downfall for monarchical government. Following the argument above, the monarch is capable of exerting maximum repressive force over the nation, and must do so to maintain a balanced political system. As such, he or she is capable of ruling a large and wealthy state. But conversely, the monarch is at constant personal risk of having his or her position usurped (Rousseau 1973e: 245), and is, because he or she has no equal or superior, more vulnerable to immoral temptation and activity (Rousseau 1973e:

245-257). Monarchies tend, according to Rousseau, to be strong but rarely good government.

The dilution of repression in an aristocratic government means that the repressive force exerted by each *Magistrate* (aristocrat), is only a fraction of that held by a monarch. Rousseau displays a degree of ambivalence towards the merits of aristocratic republics. Such a form of government demands, he argues, “moderation on the side of the rich and contentment on the side of the poor” (Rousseau 1973e: 242), and depends upon a “certain inequality of fortune” (Rousseau 1973e: 243), that he generally finds to be repugnant. Cranston suggests that Rousseau, in his more down-to-earth moments, accepts that aristocracy might be a fall-back position for modern government but that “instead of an aristocracy based on blood ... he looks for an aristocracy based on democratic choice coupled with moral criteria” (Cranston 1984: 121). Thus, as is evident in his “Dedication to the Republic of Geneva”, a preface to the Second Discourse, Rousseau believes that the Republic of Geneva exhibits such capacities, where citizens and rulers “are equal both by education and by the rights of birth, and inferior only, by their own will” (Rousseau 1973e: 40). An ‘elected aristocracy’, which many may consider to be parallel to our representative democracy, “means uprightness, understanding, experience, and all other claims to pre-eminence and public esteem become so many further guarantees of wise government” (Rousseau 1973e: 242).

Democracy diffuses repressive force into the many hands of the citizenry. It involves direct, popular self-government and, therefore, requires a high degree of participation from the citizenry. It is also the ‘most perfect’ form of government. In the Second Discourse Rousseau favoured a constitutional democracy, with a strict separation of judiciary from legislature (Rousseau 1973a: 35-36). In such an ideal state:

The people having in respect of their social relations concentrated all their wills into one, the several articles, concerning which this will is

explained, become so many fundamental laws, obligatory on all the members of the State without exception, and one of these articles regulates the choice and power of the magistrates appointed over the execution of the rest. This power extends to everything which may maintain the constitution, without going so far as to alter it. ... The magistrate, on his side, binds himself to use the power he is entrusted with only in conformity with the intentions of his constituents, to maintain them all in the peaceable possession of what belongs to them, and to prefer on every occasion the public interest to his own (Rousseau 1973a: 106-107).

In the *Social Contract*, Rousseau describes ‘real democracy’ as the system “in which the executive and the legislative powers are united” (Rousseau 1973e: 239). The bodies which make the law and the bodies which execute it are one and the same.

Rousseau suggests that a democratic state requires four important functional aspects. Firstly, in terms of both its physical boundaries and population, a democracy must be sufficiently small so that the “people can readily be got together and where each citizen can with ease know all the rest” (Rousseau 1973e: 240). Secondly, a simple society is required, with simple problems to be solved. Thirdly, there must be social and monetary equality. Finally, there must be:

little or no luxury - for luxury either comes of riches or makes them necessary; it corrupts at once rich and poor, the rich by possession and the poor by covetousness; it sells the country to softness and vanity, and takes away from the State all its citizens, to make slaves one to another, and one and all to public opinion (Rousseau 1973e: 240).

The first three aspects would be familiar to anyone who has attempted to put into practice a form of direct democracy. The fourth is perhaps the most important point to which we will return shortly.

Rousseau’s concern about democracy being ‘too perfect for men’ arises from practical as well as theoretical sources. For the former, he notes that in anything larger than a very small democratic republic, the republican requirement that the citizenry include at least all adult resident males, makes it “unimaginable that people should remain continuously assembled to devote their time to public

affairs” (Rousseau 1973e: 239). Furthermore, his critique of modern social life is such that social and monetary equality are pipe dreams of a rosier past to which there will be no return (Rousseau 1973a). Complicating this is the fact that in the *Social Contract*, he argues that the tendency towards degeneration that is found in human society in general also occurs in specific political institutions as well (Rousseau 1973e: 257-261). Thus, even if all the conditions for democracy could be fulfilled, Rousseau cannot conceive of a long-term stable democratic state.

The realisation of republican democracy: The inherently unstable republic

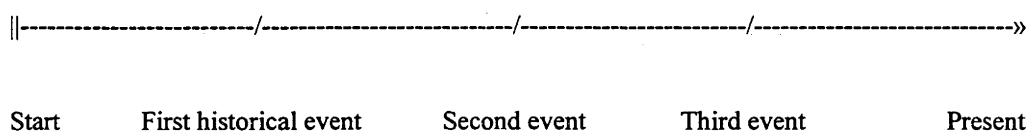
Pocock, in his influential work *The Machiavellian Moment* (1975), tells us that the principal problem for Renaissance republicans was the inevitable instability of political institutions. The concern was that this instability would render impossible any form of lasting institutional design, particularly where republics already existed, and where it was possible that a republican model may be adopted. The problem was not so much the creation of a republican form of government, but its maintenance as an institution, in other words, its realisation. Longevity, in a time of instability, was regarded as very desirable.

Three forces were at work in raising institutional instability as a major issue for early modern republicans. Firstly there is a particular notion of time and change which, by its logic, sows the seeds of doubt. Second, there is a general concern that humans are too imperfect to sustain a perfect society or institution. Sources for this concern vary among republicans from Christian notions of the ‘fallen’ nature of man to forms of social evolutionary theory. Thirdly, there was the undeniable evidence of history that showed that the Ancient republics had “declined and ceased to be” (Pocock 1975: 76).

The “problem in time”, as Pocock describes it (1975: 75), was held to be common for all forms of polity, but was especially concerning to those advocating the best, but apparently most vulnerable, form of government, the democratic

republic. As a consequence, republicans were generally doubtful about the prospects for a stable democratic republic, with Rousseau being perhaps the most extremely pessimistic example of this.

Rousseau's negative analysis of human society and its institutional forms is based on a belief in the inevitability of change guided by two principles: linearity and unidirectionality. Each of these features leads him to a very pessimistic account of human society which feeds directly into his work on democracy. The underlying notion of time and change that Rousseau shares with other republicans can be illustrated by a metaphorical generic 'time-line'. A generic time-line can be rendered pictorially as follows:



There are a number of features evident from such a concept. Firstly, nothing is permanent and change is therefore inevitable. As an extension of this, change is necessarily successive or evolutionary. Secondly, there is no apparent possibility of events not falling somewhere on the timeline. If the timeline is said to cover the whole of human history, then, provided there was enough space, it would theoretically be possible to represent on it every single event in human existence at all given moments. History is, therefore, linear. Thirdly, this system is open-ended at only one extremity. There is no end, other than the ever-changing 'present', but there is a definite beginning. There is no possibility, for example, of circular notions of historical change. History is, therefore, also unidirectional. This view of history as a one-way evolutionary process is characteristically modern, and is of great importance in understanding the structure of republican thought in general and Rousseau's work in particular. I will briefly discuss each of these three features, before examining their combined effect on Rousseau's republican thought.

The republican view is that human society is dynamic, and ever changing. Aristotle had said that human affairs were in inevitable and eternal motion, and this attitude imbues the republican tradition (Aristotle 1996: 223b-224a). Machiavelli incorporated this into his notion of Fortune, the unstoppable external force of circumstance that is “the arbiter of one half of our actions” (Machiavelli 1979b: 159). Fortune is fickle, tamed only by “impetuosity”, and even then its favour is only temporary. Old habits and institutions cannot be relied upon, as Fortune does not smile upon those who “weakly” rely on the past (Machiavelli 1979b: 158-162). We cannot, therefore, control Fortune, nor avoid it, but must ride it and use it when it arrives. Such a notion implies that we should expect that political institutions will change and that nothing can stop this.

Rather than talk of Fortune, Rousseau suggests that the mechanism that drives the constant changes in people, society and its products is what he terms, ‘perfectibility’:

it is the faculty of self-improvement, which, by the help of circumstances, gradually develops all the rest of our faculties, and is inherent in the species as in the individual. ... [T]his distinctive and almost unlimited faculty is the source of all human misfortunes ... it is this which, in time, draws man out of his original state ... successively producing in different ages his discoveries and his errors, his vices and his virtues, makes him at length a tyrant both over himself and over nature (Rousseau 1973a: 60).

Perfectibility leads to inevitable change and for Rousseau, such change was always for the worse. Unlike the framers of the question to which his answer brought him to public notoriety, namely “Has the restoration of the arts and sciences had a purifying effect upon morals?” (the ‘First Discourse’),⁷¹ for which the expected answer would have been ‘yes’, Rousseau, in typical fashion, argues exactly the opposite. ‘Perfectibility’ does not entail ever greater perfection, just successive change, which he interprets as successive degradation of the human

⁷¹ Rousseau (1973c) - first published in 1750.

spirit, for as he says “in the establishment and perfection of societies, [we can see] the reasons for ... the diminution of our species” (Rousseau 1973a: 123).

The structure of Rousseau’s work indicates an assumption that all of human history can be represented on a single line, although at any given moment, different societies may fall on different points on the scale. Thus, all of human development may be understood as following a universally linear path. This in turn entails a belief in the inevitability of changes plotted on the line. A society at one point on the line, will, because of the structure envisaged, inevitably evolve to the next point, and so on. We can see this in the regretful way in which Rousseau uses contemporary anthropology to describe the sturdy, uncomplicated and independent ‘Caribs of Venezuela’, knowing that, by the force of perfectibility, they will end up as degenerate as contemporary Europeans (Rousseau 1973a: 52-83).

Coupled with the first principle underpinning the inevitable and constant change in human history, namely its linearity, is the second principle: that it follows one direction. As each historical development is successive, that is, building upon previous structures, it follows that there can be no return to a previous stage of development. Rousseau argues, for example, there can be no return to the state of nature from the state of civil society (Rousseau 1973a: 97 & 125).

Republican ‘time’, or more generally, modern notions of time and change, is incompatible with the notions of cyclical change that are common in many non-Western cultures, and are present in the Greek theories of historical change discussed in the previous chapter. Both Plato and Aristotle described cycles of political institutional change, in which successive forms of institutions arise in reaction to the drawbacks of its predecessors. Thus, for example in Plato’s cycle, put forward in *The Republic*, timarchy leads to oligarchy, oligarchy to democracy, democracy to tyranny, and tyranny back to timarchy. The only way out of this

cycle is to build a perfect stable republic, which breaks the cycle of degeneration by corresponding exactly to philosophical principles. Time for Plato is not a problem because the true republic will be outside of its effects. Further, for those of us ignorant enough to live in an ordinary community and who, for example, desire a democracy, all we have to do is wait for our time to come. Conversely, the linear and unidirectional nature of republican notions of time and change is incompatible with the systemic circularity that one finds in *The Republic*.⁷²

To speak of human history as dynamic, linear and unidirectional does not of itself imply a positive or negative direction in this change, or indeed that moral judgements can be made about such changes. We will find, for example, that both liberal and Marxist thought, which share the view of change outlined above, usually see it as positive, at least in the sense of correcting or responding to contemporary perceived problems. In the case of Marxism, the Hegelian dialectic assumes change to be the overcoming of mutual oppositions, which simply *is* progress.

Rousseau and his fellow republicans would not be so sure. They were convinced, for a variety of reasons, that humans and their societal artefacts and institutions had a tendency to degenerate. Most republicans appear to have accepted as fact the Classical view that political institutions will decline over time, without the concomitant cyclical notion of change. Their concern, therefore, is to design institutions that have a capacity for self-correction, and can resist the forces of change. This will be discussed shortly.

Rousseau's reasons for believing that change is inevitable and degenerative lie not in an uncritical acceptance of the words of the Ancients, but in a 'state of nature' argument which reverses that positive image of civil society that we find

⁷² See: Rousseau (1973e: 259).

in the works of the likes of Hobbes and Locke. Rousseau's more prominent works can be seen as analyses of the woes that have befallen modern men and women. The *Discourses on Inequality* (Rousseau 1973a), *Political Economy*⁷³ and the *Arts and Sciences* (Rousseau: 1973c) analyse and theorise this 'problem'. The famous novels *Émile*⁷⁴ and *Julie*⁷⁵ extend this theme into the realms of education and moral training. His polemical writings⁷⁶ reinforce the basic point: social progress or 'perfectibility' is degenerative (Rousseau 1973a: 60 & 123). The ever-increasing decline in moral standards, loss of independence and general social and political corruption are as irreversible as they are inevitable (Rousseau 1973a: 97 & 125).

Rousseau depicts humanity's 'progress' through history as driven by a dichotomy opposing nature to society. This forms the source of human inequality and moral degradation:

I conceive that there are two kinds of inequality among the human species; one, which I call natural or physical, because it is established by nature, and consists in a difference of age, health, bodily strength, and qualities of the mind or of the soul: and another, which may be called moral or political inequality, because it depends on a kind of convention, and is established, or at least authorized, by the consent of men (Rousseau 1973a: 49).

The latter kind of inequality is what concerns us here, as it is the source, in Rousseau's view, of institutional instability. The nature/society dichotomy is essential to Rousseau's argument, because his most basic point is that with the advent of society comes a massive increase in the level and manner of inequalities

⁷³ Rousseau (1973b) - first published in 1755.

⁷⁴ Rousseau (1974) - first published in 1762.

⁷⁵ Rousseau (1968) - first published in 1761.

⁷⁶ Such as the *Letters to D'Alembert*, 'From the Mountain' (first published in 1764); and his earlier autobiographical works (Rousseau 1953 - published posthumously).

between people.⁷⁷ Within the confines of this dichotomy, further distinctions are drawn. He identifies four kinds of inequality, within three levels of human progress. The four kinds of inequality are: “riches, nobility or rank, power and personal merit [and form] ... the principal distinctions by which men form an estimate of each other in society” (Rousseau 1973a: 111). The original basis of these inequalities was personal merit, but in modern society riches provides the key transmissible form of inequality (Rousseau 1973a: 111). The three levels of human progress are: “the establishment of laws and of the right of property was its first term, the institution of magistracy the second, and the conversion of legitimate into arbitrary power the third” (Rousseau 1973a: 109).

Nature is a constant, as humans cannot cease being natural beings, whereas society is a construct. However, Rousseau does point out that it is difficult to separate the natural from the social in humanity, and that it is possible that mankind has changed due to the impact of social living (Rousseau 1973a: 43-44).⁷⁸ Rousseau argues that in a pre-social context, humans were in a state where only the ‘natural’ differences between humans existed. Such a ‘state of nature’ was one of inequality of individuals. However, in such a state, Rousseau saw people leading solitary, self-sufficient lives with little interaction and, as such, these inequalities counted for very little, other than for comfort and ease of life (Rousseau 1973a: 95). Thus the relationship between people in the state of nature was roughly one of equality, because there was no opportunity for any natural inequalities to be used systematically to dominate others (Rousseau 1973a: 116).

The process of producing society, is, in Rousseau’s view, a sad tale of human degeneration (Rousseau 1973a: 110-111). With the rise of social, that is, socially

⁷⁷ ‘Equality’ here, as throughout the entire Discourse, is taken to be an absolute; that is, each individual is different in physical, moral and spiritual capacities, and therefore cannot be equal to another person.

⁷⁸ See also Cranston (1984).

interactive life, came the secondary, and in Rousseau's eyes, more insidious form of inequality: social inequality. The social system, which is seen to produce an ever-increasing set of "necessities" for human life, is structured upon an inequality that has an inherent tendency to get worse. Rousseau's vitriolic attacks on 'luxury' are premised on the notion that humanity has become dependent upon things that used to be unnecessary (Rousseau 1973a: 125). Shklar states that Rousseau had "a deep moral distaste for luxury ... [which] was a powerful stimulus to even greater inequalities" (Shklar 1978: 18). Dependence is equated with weakness both physical and spiritual, a weakness that allows exploitation by those in a dominant position in society.⁷⁹ Such dependence is portrayed as contributing to a decline in individual autonomy and liberty (Rousseau 1973a: 102-105, 115-116, and 123).

One must not make the error of seeing Rousseau as wishing to remove inequality: to do so would be to deny the internal logic of his argument. Natural inequality, by definition, cannot be removed because it is an integral part of human existence. Social inequality, for all its potentially negative affects, cannot be removed without denying the societal existence upon which it is based. Rousseau argues that it would be impossible for such a removal anyway, because of mankind's dependence on the products of society (Rousseau 1973a: 125 [Footnote (i)] and 97). It is with their translation into social inequalities that the natural differences become of importance: "it is easy to conceive how much less the difference between man and man must be in a state of nature than in a state of society, and how greatly the natural inequality of mankind must be increased by the inequalities of social institutions" (Rousseau 1973a: 80).

⁷⁹ Perhaps the most obvious aspect that Rousseau sees of social inequality is in property relations. To speak of property in any other sense than of pure personal control of something, is to speak of inequality (Rousseau 1973a: 87-95). Thus, when property becomes an *asset*, when it gains value because it is in a constant and structural shortage or demand, then the person who holds property has a significant advantage over the person who does not (See: Rousseau 1973a: 84).

For Rousseau, then, humanity and its institutions are in perpetual change. In this his views accord with his fellow republicans. For Rousseau all such change is negative, whereas for many other republicans, degeneration in institutions is indeed a *tendency* that, left untouched, would undermine the longevity of the republic. Machiavelli, for example, argues in his *Discourse* that “all things of this world have a limit to their existence” but that all forms of political organisation:

contain within themselves some goodness by means of which they have gained their initial reputation and their first growth. Since, in the course of time, this goodness becomes corrupted, *if nothing intervenes* that may bring it up to the proper mark, that body is, of necessity, killed by such corruption (Machiavelli 1979a: 351- my emphasis).

For Machiavelli, institutions, republics among them, can be redeemed from states of corruption. Such rebirth he argues could have two sources. The first source of rebirth is an external event that is so traumatic that it forces a republic to renew its institutions. Machiavelli uses the example of the capture of Ancient Rome by the Gauls- an event that united the Romans in their determination to drive out the invaders and in the process re-invigorated Roman political, religious and social life (Machiavelli 1979a: 351-352.). The second source of redemption for a corrupt republic is internal, either he says:

from a law, which often obliges the men who reside in that body to examine their affairs, or more often, by the one good man born among them who, with his exemplary deeds and his able works, produces the same effect as does the law (Machiavelli 1979a: 352).

What Machiavelli means by ‘examining one’s affairs’ is a bit unclear, but he gives examples such as: laws and law-enforcers that promote good standards of behaviour; and leading citizens whose virtue encourages others to imitate him (Machiavelli 1979a: 353-354). ‘Examining one’s affairs’ should be regular, perhaps every ten years or so. It also might not be a pleasant experience. Machiavelli suggests that examination of one’s affairs should strike “that same terror and fear into the hearts of men that they instilled when they first constituted

it” (Machiavelli 1979a: 353). This is not a suggestion that looms large in later republican writings.

Other republicans opt for different means of avoiding the problem of institutional decline. Harrington, for example, rejects the notion of renewal, instead opting for a more Platonic model, which by its very design can break with the natural tendency toward degeneration. In his (rather mystical) perfect republic, *Oceana*, law is handed down by a legislator guaranteeing virtue and longevity to the state (Cotton 1991: 82-93).

Similarly, Jefferson opts for a model containing an in-built mechanism that stands as a bulwark against degeneration. Unlike Harrington’s perfect institution, Jefferson turns to a segment of the American population to act as a force of virtue against the forces of vice. In a Rousseauian move he argues that the “natural progress and consequence of the arts” is toward “subservience and venality [which] suffocates the germ of virtue, and prepares fit tools for the designs of ambition”. This ‘progress’ he associates with city-dwellers. Standing against this tendency is a virtuous agrarian population “in whose breasts he [God] has made his peculiar deposit for substantial and genuine virtue”.⁸⁰ Thus, institutional decline could be resisted if the population was not too dominated by city-dwellers, and the political system was designed to protect and reflect this.

In Machiavelli, Harrington and Jefferson, we see different ways of responding to the general republican belief that political institutions are inherently unstable. The particular tool each chooses reflects a common goal and a common technique for achieving this goal. The goal is to ensure that their democratic republics survive. The technique is to ensure the virtue of its citizens. The difference lies in the means by which they seek to ensure this virtue. Intriguingly, Rousseau

⁸⁰ Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, “Query XIX”, quoted in Pocock (1975: 532-533).

responds similarly despite his most pessimistic of democratic republican accounts. In order to do this, however, he has to get around his apparently certain rejection of democratic republicanism as too perfect for mere mortals.

Civic virtue as a bulwark against institutional instability

For republican thinkers the issue of the realisation of the republic turns on the question of instability. If the republic cannot be made stable, that is, if it is not possible to create and replicate the conditions for its survival, then it cannot, in the terminology of this thesis, be genuinely realised. As we have just seen, however, for most republicans, instability is not inevitable or irreversible, but merely a tendency in political institutions. The republican theoretical response to instability is to demand civic virtue from the citizenry as a bulwark against instability.

Civic virtue is the means by which the republic is to be realised. The issue of civic virtue and how it is generated will be discussed shortly, but first the problem of Rousseau's pessimism remains to be addressed. Unlike other republicans, Rousseau seems in his early writings, such as *The Second Discourse*, to be discounting the possibility of the realisation of a democratic republic, because all political institutions are inherently and degenerately unstable.

There is in all of Rousseau's works a distaste for modern degeneracy, and a nostalgia for the simple uprightness of earlier societies. What we see in progression in Rousseau's work, however, is a gradual move away from the certainty in the inevitability of degeneration. Degeneration, and the impossibility of democracy which was so inevitable in the first *Discourse*, sits uncomfortably with the direction taken by Rousseau's later political and moral writings. It seems that the decline in institutional stability and personal and social morality, is softened in Rousseau's later works to being something more like a general principle rather than an inevitable outcome.

It is clear from Rousseau's later works that, that which is general does not always occur in the particular. For example, particular wills may be out of step with the General Will.⁸¹ So, too, general political and moral tendencies toward degeneration might not always be observed in the particular. It will be argued below that Rousseau's later works can be read as an attempt to demonstrate how individuals and societies may 'be out of step' with the general tendency toward decay. If the generality/particularity distinction holds, for example, then the democratic republic, which may not generally be possible, could be rendered possible in the particular. It seems to me that he implicitly explores the possibilities of such concepts in his educative and moral works such as *Émile* and *Julie: the New Eloise*. These, it seems, are attempts to show how a particular person, with regards to virtue, may defy general trends. The question then remains, could one create a *society* of Émiles and Julies, a truly Rousseauian democratic republic?

Civic virtue, or as Rousseau terms it, 'republican virtue', is perhaps the most problematic, yet crucial, element of the republican credo. Michelman and Sunstein are quite correct in describing civic virtue as the "animating principle" of republicanism (Michelman 1986: 18 and Sunstein 1985: 31). It is civic virtue that gives republicans their primary tool for solving the problem of institutional

⁸¹ Rousseau uses 'General Will' to refer to the common interest of the people. Unlike later Utilitarians, Rousseau does not believe that the common interest is the sum of the individual interests of the people. These individual interests he calls the particular will, the sum of which is the 'will of all' (Rousseau 1973e: 203). This represents merely a collection of individually selfish interests. The General Will is "always for our own good" (Rousseau 1973e: 203), and as such can never be wrong. Importantly, however, an individual's perception of what is their best interest may well differ from the General Will. If this is the case, then it is the individual's particular will which is at fault, not the General Will (Rousseau 1973e: 203-4). The General Will is infallible (Rousseau 1973e: 203-4), indivisible (Rousseau 1973e: 201), indestructible (Rousseau 1973e: 274-6), and moral (in the literal sense of the word) (Rousseau 1973e: 212-3).

Rousseau argues that the General Will of the body politic cannot contain any particularity (Rousseau 1973e: 207, 211) either in its form or in its acts. This final point, he suggests, is essential, as partial or specific activities are the product of partial or specific considerations, not the interest of the whole (Rousseau 1973e: 211). Difficulties with regards to society and government are not, therefore, the result of a failure in the General Will, but its interpretation by *particular* wills, be they the wills of individuals, groups, or governments.

instability and for realising the democratic republic. It is civic virtue that Isaac believes causes Dworkin to label republicanism as ‘conservatism’ and MacIntyre to claim that republicanism represented a failed attempt at a “project of restoring a community of virtue” and provide a “moral vocabulary of virtue, the good life, and community radically at odds with modern liberalism” (Isaac 1988: 351-352).

The purpose of this section is to outline the role that civic virtue plays in democratic republicanism and the means by which it is created. The *content* of the civic virtues has been well discussed elsewhere, and is only of minor interest to this thesis.⁸² The republicans’ most potent weapon against instability, is not the virtues themselves but, rather, it is the method by which an individual generates virtue. When an individual generates virtue by controlling his or her actions, this has positive consequences for the democratic republic. This is what makes it *civic* as opposed to merely moral or political virtue (see Burt 1992: 6).

A few points about the republican notion of civic virtue ought to be noted before proceeding further. Firstly, civic virtue exists in a relationship of mutual dependence with government. Gey writes that “republicans view civic virtue as necessary for government, they also view government as necessary for civic virtue” (Gey 1993: 806-807). In our discussion we can say that republicans hold that civic virtue upholds the conditions for stable republican government, and that it is, therefore, incumbent on republican governments to uphold the conditions for virtue. In other words, civic virtue helps us realise the democratic republic, and the republic must, therefore, ensure that civic virtue is maintained in the citizenry.

⁸² Some recent examples include: Boesch (1988: 30-34), Buchwalter (1992), Burt (1992), Carrithers (1991: 255-258), Claeys (1986), Coats (1994), Galston (1994: 364-366), Gey (1993: 804-811), Isaac (1988: 369-373), Pangle (1988), Rodgers (1992: 35-38), Schneewind (1993: 186-206), Sherry (1995: 145-156), Shumer (1979: 8-12), Slote (1993), Spitz (1994: 344-346), Springborg (1991: 508-509), Sullivan (1994: 76-77 and 88-93).

Secondly, while ‘civic virtue’ has been the term used most often in recent times in relation to republican thought, it, like ‘democracy’, was not always used in the past. Other terms are used to describe virtue in the republican literature, including “public virtue, private virtue, public spirit, politick virtues, patriotism, but not ... civic virtue nor even ... political virtue” (see Burt 1992: 4). For the sake of consistency, however, ‘civic virtue’ will be used throughout this thesis to refer to “those dispositions of the individual that lead him or her to engage in the sort of public (and private) behaviour that enable a civic mode of life both to survive and flourish” (Burt 1992: 7). Where ‘virtue’ is being used in a non-civic sense, this will be noted.

Thirdly, as the above definition indicates, civic virtue is found in ‘dispositions’ that lead to public *action*. Such public action is political in the republican sense of the word.⁸³ Thus, while the virtues themselves may be ‘dispositions’; what matters to the republican polity is acts consequent upon those dispositions. Rousseau provides us with a very good account of this point, and in doing so highlights the strong link between modern republican notions of virtue and their Classical forebears.

Rousseau’s democratic ambivalence stems from his concern for what he perceives to be the basis of the ‘well ordered’ community: virtue.⁸⁴ You will recall that the fourth and perhaps most important condition he identifies for republican democracy is a society of ‘little luxury’. This ascetic ideal is linked to his concept of civic virtue. There are three aspects that will be discussed in relation to the Rousseauian notion of civic virtue. Firstly, civic virtue is necessary for the good polity, and most especially for democracy. Secondly, civic

⁸³ Arendt (1958). See also my discussion of Arendt’s notion of political action in Clarke (1990: 12-25).

⁸⁴ See Viroli (1988: 37-46; and 1987: 160-161 & 173).

virtue is generally in decline in modern society. Thirdly, civic virtue is an individual quality that is created by work on the self, conducted by the individual concerned.

The good polity presupposes virtue in the governing body (Rousseau 1973e: 248). The better the form of government, the more civic virtue is required of the citizenry and the *Prince* (Rousseau 1973e: 230; and 1974: 424-427). The lack of civic virtue allows for particular wills to obscure the General Will (Rousseau 1973b: 140 & 1973d: 203-213).⁸⁵ Civic virtue unlike power, is not constant across different governmental forms (Rousseau 1974: 429). The three forms of government identified by Rousseau: Democracy, Aristocracy and Monarchy, are such that the 'best' form, democracy, requires the greatest civic virtue from the greatest number of persons (Rousseau 1973e: 237-238). This is compared to Aristocracy and Monarchy, which require respectively less civic virtue (Rousseau 1973e: 230-233; & 1974: 427-430). Rousseau's mathematical analogy discussed previously provides us with the means for arriving at this conclusion.

Civic virtue is a personal characteristic. Each person can only possess one person's civic virtue. All persons who are involved in the governing of the community must be virtuous. Using the 'continuous proportion', we can see that in a monarchy, a king being only one person, needs only one person's civic virtue in the governmental relationship with the *Sovereign*. In other words, the amount of civic virtue required to make a good monarchy is tiny when compared to the size of the population and the amount of repressive force wielded by the monarch. That does not mean that a monarchy will necessarily *be* virtuous, because there is little room for error. If a monarch is *vicious*, then by extension, the whole republic is corrupt. A monarch, too, because he or she possesses all the power of the *Executive* has the greatest capacity to misuse this power. Thus, the argument

⁸⁵ See also Riley (1991) and Greenleaf (1972).

that “the prince is ... fully credited with all the virtues he ought to possess, and is supposed to be always what he should be” (Rousseau 1973e: 248) is, according to Rousseau, wrong, because “in monarchies those who rise to the top are most often petty blunderers, petty swindlers, and petty intriguers, whose petty talents cause them to get into the highest positions in court” (Rousseau 1973e: 245). Political success does not entail civic virtue, but good government does (Rousseau 1973e: 248).

As the number of *Magistrates* increases, the absolute volume of civic virtue increases to the same extent, *and* the proportion of civic virtue required for the republic to be good, relative to the size of the community, also increases. Thus, as we approach republican democracy, in which all citizens are *Magistrates*, we are approaching a community that requires the most civic virtue possible, both in terms of absolute volume and as a proportion of its population. Democracy requires that 100% of the citizenry is virtuous. However, the power possessed by the individual citizen is only his or her portion of the total *Executive* power. Thus a citizen in a democracy must be virtuous, but is relatively powerless.

Following Rousseau’s degenerative theory of social change, it is not surprising that he feels that society in general is increasingly less virtuous. Particular individuals, however, may be made virtuous, but this is hard work. The enormous effort expended in *Émile* and *Julie* to produce just two virtuous individuals illustrates this point. This renders the possibilities for a *particular* democratic republic remote, but not entirely extinguished.

The third point noted above is that civic virtue is an individual quality that is created by work on the self, conducted by the individual concerned. Civic virtue is very much a product of a particular internal relationship. It arises out of how one lives one’s life in the political life of the community. In the case of a democratic republic, which requires all citizens to be virtuous, the problem is that *generally* the citizenry is not virtuous enough: “no government [is] so subject to

civil wars and *intestine* agitations as democratic or popular government” (Rousseau 1973e: 240- my emphasis).⁸⁶ The reference to lack of bodily control or internal imbalance is reminiscent of the Greek solution to this problem: *enkrateia*, ‘self-control’, or, in Aristotle’s terminology, ‘continence’. Rousseau does not refer to self-control as a solution in the *Social Contract*, rather he refers to the end result, ‘Republican’ virtue, to denote the necessary qualities for a democratic citizenry. It is in his educative tract *Émile* that he makes explicit that one of the principal techniques of virtuous life is the exertion of self-control (Rousseau 1974: 408-409).⁸⁷

In Book IV of *Émile*, the tutor Jean-Jacques, forces his charge Émile to be separated from his beloved Sophie. He does this on the grounds that Émile has been overwhelmed by his ‘first’ great passion, in this case, love. He has lost control, and according to Jean-Jacques, is in danger of falling from virtue:

What is meant by a virtuous man? He who can conquer his affections; for then he follows his reason, his conscience; he does his duty; he is his own master and nothing can turn him from the right way. So far you [Émile] have had only the semblance of liberty, the precarious liberty of the slave who has not received his orders. Now is the time for real freedom; learn to be your own master; control your heart, my Émile, and you will be virtuous (Rousseau 1974: 408).

To be virtuous is to be self-controlled. It is also to be truly free.⁸⁸

It is the fact that virtue is generated by self-control that makes it the tool by which republicans can counter the corrosive effects of change on the republic. Civic virtue for Rousseau and other republicans maintains the conditions for realising the democratic republic. Self-control, or “moderation”, stops the democratic republic from falling apart as individuals exercise their political

⁸⁶ See also Rousseau (1973a: 122).

⁸⁷ See Bloom (1978).

⁸⁸ See my discussion of republican liberty in Appendix B.

freedoms (Pangle 1988: 89-98). Indeed, one could argue that there is little else available to *democratic* republicans to prevent the slide into instability. Autocratic repression would be available in Machiavelli's and Montesquieu's aristocratic republics (Machiavelli 1979b and Carrithers 1991) to control libertines.⁸⁹ Such external repression is not an appropriate option in a republic in which all citizens are also Magistrates. The theory of civic virtue expects these citizen-Magistrates individually to exert the repression on themselves.

Republican civic virtue is created by self-control. This self-control applies to a citizen's actions. For most republicans, this statement is sufficient to ensure the realisation of the democratic republic. Rousseau, however, goes further to tie self-control to the *source* of a citizen's actions. He does this through a roundabout argument about the management of the source of the passions that drive a citizen's actions.

In the novel *Émile*, Rousseau, using the character Jean-Jacques, argues that the passions cannot be directly the objects of control. In keeping with Classical Greek ethical theory discussed in Chapter Two, he says:

it is a mistake to classify the passions as lawful and unlawful, so as to yield to the one and refuse the other. All alike are good if we are their masters; all alike are bad if we abandon ourselves to them. ... To feel or not to feel a passion is beyond our control, but we can control ourselves (Rousseau 1974: 409).

The control of one's actions contributes to the maintenance of moral equilibrium and autonomy. Thus "a man is not guilty", says Jean-Jacques, "if he loves his neighbour's wife, provided he keeps this unhappy passion under the control of the law of duty; [conversely] he is guilty if he loves his own wife so greatly so as to sacrifice everything to that love" (Rousseau 1974: 409).

⁸⁹ See also Pangle (1988: 89-94).

At first glance, therefore, it would appear that we find in Rousseau a very similar concept of civic virtue to that which we found in Greek ethical thought. Civic virtue is manifested in the self-control of one's actions. The passions that drive actions cannot themselves be controlled. As we saw recently, however, Jean-Jacques also tells Émile to "control your heart ... and you will be virtuous" (Rousseau 1974: 408). Is this not a contradiction, as it seems to suggest that the passions can, and indeed must, be controlled if one is to be virtuous? In short, the answer is no, because Rousseau believes that he has found a way of managing the passions, by managing their source, the 'heart', or more accurately, *amour-propre*.

The means by which Rousseau seeks to control the passions is indirect. Jean-Jacques blends psychology with education to mould the young Émile's *amour-propre*, so that passions with 'bad' consequences are counter-balanced by passions with 'good' ones. *Amour-propre* is the *source* of all our passions. *Amour-propre* is a creation of the state of civil society, and results from the comparisons people make between themselves and others, and the value judgements they draw from these. Usually these judgements lead to conflict. *Amour-propre* is, he says,

a purely relative and factitious feeling, which arises in the state of society, leads each individual to make more of himself than of any other, causes all the mutual damage men inflict on one another, and is the real source of the 'sense of honour' (Rousseau 1973a: 73).

Jean-Jacques moulds Émile's *amour-propre* by using the innate human capacity of perfectibility, which we discussed earlier. Perfectibility, properly trained, enables Émile to make comparisons between the passions thrown up by *amour-propre*. Émile learns to judge passions with 'good' and 'bad' consequences, and to counter-balance these against one-another, so that he is not overwhelmed by any one passion.

The motivating force behind this balancing act is not reason, because for Rousseau reason itself is a product of the passions. Unlike the Greeks, for example, “reason is no longer sufficient for guaranteeing morality. Rousseau suggests that reason will be employed to serve *vicious* ends” (Emberley 1985: 158- my emphasis). The motivating force behind the balancing of passions is a passion itself: fear.⁹⁰ Émile is “regularly reminded of his vulnerability” and his:

fearfulness will be channelled to provide for a social virtue that is a ... binding force in men’s coexistence. Fear becomes an even more creative and positive passion in Rousseau’s account, for he will combine it with *amour-propre* to create a virtue. Out of fearfulness for himself, and exposed to the common lot of men, Émile will extend his care for himself to others, at the same time satisfying his relative regard for himself (Emberley 1985: 168-169).

In keeping with Rousseau’s definition of *amour-propre* as a relative feeling, the fear felt by Émile is a fear for himself, relative to the world in which he lives.

Fear can motivate and moderate the passions:

fear can moderate *amour-propre* because the comparisons *amour-propre* makes on behalf of fear can forestall the emergence of harmful passions. When *amour-propre* is engaged in imagining the pleasures of others, it produces envy, regret, jealousy, covetousness, and vanity. Moreover, it makes a man unhappy because he does not command these same pleasures. Moreover, men observing others’ enjoyment makes them want to enjoy the same pleasures, thereby making them dependent on others (Emberley 1985: 170-171).

The correct development and use of fear in the management of *amour-propre* creates a force that will bind citizens together in mutual compassion. The answer to managing the passions and, therefore, creating civic virtue, is to use the “passions to provide motives for morality” (Emberley 1985: 158), or as Rousseau puts it: “we should rather try to extract from the evil itself the remedy which can cure it” (Rousseau 1973d: 176). Thus Rousseau overcomes the problems thrown up by degeneration through an ingenious psychological argument in which a particularly well-trained individual can become civilly virtuous, and thus, theoretically, could become a democratic citizen.

⁹⁰ Emberley (1985: 151-176).

It is interesting to compare Rousseau's argument in relation to the control of the passions and the generation of virtue with the two principal sources upon which he had to draw: Classical Greek philosophy and Christian teachings. As we found in the previous chapter, Greek ethical theory focussed all its energies on the control of one's behaviour. Whether one is referring to Stoic, Aristotelian, Platonic or Epicurean ethics, virtuous *enkrateia* is an activity of the self, acting on the self, in the control of one's actions.⁹¹ To that extent, Rousseau's notion of civic virtue is quite Greek, but as we have just seen, he goes beyond this into the use and management of the passions, an activity more often associated with Christian moral theory.

In the Christian tradition the passions themselves are the site of direct moral control. Foucault argues that the Judeo-Christian position on the creation and maintenance of virtue, is that "pastoral power" is to be exercised not only over a person's actions, but their passions as well (Foucault 1981, 1991a & 1991b). For the Christian, it *is* wrong, sinful in fact, for a man to desire his neighbour's wife, even if one does not act on this passion. Virtue involves the control of one's passions first and foremost, and as a consequence, one's actions will also be controlled. The contrast with Rousseau's thought is that his method was indirectly to control the passions *through* the use of countervailing passions, whereas for the Christian, passions could be directly controlled through both the restraint of the body and the use of reason.

Rousseau's extensive critique of 'luxury' as a source of dependence and, therefore, inequality (Shklar 1978: 18), resonates with a form of asceticism that appears more Christian than Classical. While many Classical texts, particularly

⁹¹ See for example Aristotle (1955: 202-205 & 214-217); Plato (1956: 89; 1955: 373-374); Epicurus (1987a: 115-116; 1987b: 113-114; 1987c:115-116), Plutarch (1987a: 377-378; 1987b: 378 & 379); Seneca (1987: 379); and Cicero (1987: 381). Viroli notes that the "concept of moderation was central to Rousseau's definition of virtue", the "principal source" of which "is indubitably Plutarch" (Viroli, 1987, p.160).

Platonic and Stoic, condemn the ‘effeminacy’ of excessive weakness for the objects of the appetites, there is no condemnation for the fulfilment of the basic necessities of life, nor, usually, of the satisfaction of the appetites, so long as the individual remains their master. Rousseauian ‘luxuries’, on the other hand, will inevitably become ‘necessities’, given the degenerative nature of social change. Denying the self ‘luxuries’ has strong prophylactic-ascetic overtones, similar to the ‘denial of the flesh’ found in enkratic (ascetic) Christianity.⁹² Thus, in his rather captivating preface to the Second Discourse, Rousseau praises the good burghers of Geneva, for their adherence to the “spirit of Christianity, [seen in their] holiness of manners, severity towards themselves, and indulgence towards their neighbours” (Rousseau 1973a: 40). Any ‘indulgence’, any luxury, is to be denied for themselves by good Christians, and to be tolerated in others in the spirit of Christian forgiveness.

Civic virtue is also something to be striven for by individuals not living in a democratic republic made up of citizen-Émiles and feminine Julies, or the socially isolated rural life at Les Charmettes with Mme de Warens that Rousseau describes as “the short period of my life’s happiness” (Rousseau 1953: 215). It would seem axiomatic that an individual practising virtuous self-control in a society built around the principles of self-gratification would be taken advantage of mercilessly. Rousseau finds justification for such virtuous behaviour, but not in the Greek notion of *enkrateia* as preserving the ‘health’ and social standing of the individual, or the Christian view of self-control as compliance with moral authority (Foucault 1981, 1991a: 353-359; and Tully 1988: 36-37).⁹³ Neither the Greek nor the Christian justification of self-control could be attractive to Rousseau. In a corrupt republic, social standing is no measure of individual moral

⁹² On the enkratic Christian tradition, see Giversen (1985), Quispel (1985) and Wilson (1985).

⁹³ See also Brown (1987 and 1988); Hadas (1965); Pagels (1988); Quispel (1985); and Rouselle (1988)

worth.⁹⁴ In addition, Rousseau was deeply opposed to, and suspicious of, compliance with any form of authority other than his own.⁹⁵ Instead, Rousseau's view is that virtuous self-control is justified because it develops individual moral autonomy (Rousseau 1974: 408). This autonomy, the liberty of 'self-mastery',⁹⁶ does not mean moral irresponsibility for Rousseau. In fact it means exactly the opposite. It increases the responsibility of the individual to be virtuous. After all, no-one else is going to be responsible for you. Virtue makes the individual a whole, independent and free person.⁹⁷

We have found that the means by which Rousseau seeks to generate civic virtue is through the indirect control of the passions by means of the management of *amour-propre*. This leaves the citizens capable of controlling themselves. Self-control, Rousseau argues, is the source of personal and civic virtue; this is good for the individual and for the democratic republic, because it binds it together against the forces of degeneration. In other words, civic virtue in Rousseau's thought, and indeed all republican thought, is the means by which the democratic republic will be realised.

It is with this thought that we turn to close our discussion of civic virtue in republican theory. Civic virtue, generated by self-control, underpins the realisation of the democratic republic. Civic virtue stands as a bulwark against the inherent instability of political institutions. Democracy is the most vulnerable

⁹⁴ In 1784 Kant made precisely this point when he said "Rousseau was not so far from right in preferring the state of savages. We are to a high degree, *cultivated*, beyond bearing by all manner of social convention and propriety. But we are a long way from being able to regard ourselves as *moral*". (Kant 1983: 36 - original emphasis).

⁹⁵ This can be witnessed in his development of a theory of individual, natural Christianity (Rousseau 1973e: 298-308; 1974: 228-278 ("The Creed of a Savoyard Priest"); and 1979:55).

⁹⁶ This theme is explored in detail by Lingis (1980).

⁹⁷ Slote argues similarly that virtue can be understood in terms of an individual's development of "self-sufficiency" in order to "learn to live on her own and make her own way in the world" (Slote 1993: 646). In a similar context see Foucault (1991a: 343).

to instability of all governmental types and, therefore, it requires the most virtue from the greatest number of citizens.

The cultivation of civic virtue is the only option open to republican theorists to realise the democratic republic. It could be objected that rather than rely on civic virtue to realise the republic, republican theorists could use institutions of government and, in particular, their product, law, to produce the same effects as virtue in terms of controlling the actions of the citizens. This was the device used by Plato to control the behaviour of the ignorant. As we will see in the next chapter, this is also the route taken by liberal democratic theory.

For republicans, the rule of law may well be a defining characteristic of a republic, but it alone is not sufficient to realise the democratic republic. There are a number of reasons for this. Firstly, law is a product of the citizen's political actions, and republicans need these actions to be controlled, *prior to* their consequences. Secondly, and following on from the first point, there is nothing to prevent bad law being perpetrated by *vicious* citizens. Law is not, therefore, sufficient to restrain the degenerative impulse, indeed it could enforce it. Thirdly, for some republicans, notably Rousseau, law does not go far enough. It may modify people's actions, but will it modify their passions? Many republicans are concerned to preserve the souls of the citizens, as well as the future of the republic. Finally, it is worth noting that the goal of republican theory is the good, democratic republic. Republicans take 'good' to be an exclusive term, rather than a relative one (Sherry 1995: 138). Law cannot make the republican democratic citizen *good*, it can merely make him or her lawful; neither can law alone make the republic itself *good*. Only virtue can achieve both these ends.

*The use and misuse of republican democratic theory: Some questions for communitarian republicans*⁹⁸

As mentioned earlier, republicanism as a separate body of theory declined in prominence in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Recently, however, there has been a revival of scholastic interest in the ideas of republicanism, for historiographical and theoretical reasons, and as a tool for contemporary political analysis. Neither the first line of interest sparked largely by Pocock (1975 and 1997) nor second line, typified by Arendt's neo-classical republicanism¹⁰⁰ and more recently, Pettit's neo-liberal republicanism (1990, 1993 and 1977)¹⁰¹ concerns us here. Whatever the merits of these works, they do not add more to the issue of realisation of the republic than has been already discussed in this thesis.

The issues to be discussed in this short section revolve around the third line of recent interest in republican thought, particularly in its association with communitarian philosophy. There are some aspects of the realisation of the republican model of virtuous democracy that we have discussed here that are likely to cause discomfort to communitarians. These aspects include the republican notion of community, restrictions on access to citizenship, the basis of civic virtue, and the de-emphasising of civil liberties.

Communitarianism, which Christodoulidis associates with the works of Sandel Taylor, MacIntyre, Rorty, Bernstein, Barber, Benhabib, Pitkin, Cornell, Herzog

⁹⁸ With apologies to Herzog (1986).

⁹⁹ With apologies to Herzog (1986).

¹⁰⁰ See Arendt (1958, 1970 a and b, and 1977), and Clarke (1990).

¹⁰¹ See Appendix B for a brief discussion of the implications of Pettit's theory of republican liberty.

and Hirsch (Christodoulidis 1993: 65),¹⁰² is best described in loose terms as a largely American, non-Marxist critique of liberalism and its perceived failings. At its core is an attempt to generate a theory of “virtue and community as an alternative to liberal Kantian theories” (Sherry 1995: 134). It is a “radically egalitarian” (Sherry 1995: 140) and civil libertarian (Gey 1993: 803) political and legal theoretical response to a “longing for community” (Hirsch 1986: 423), motivated by a deep sense of the failure of liberalism in this regard. Little wonder, then, that the republican legacy should prove such a rich vein of source material for communitarian authors. But, as would be apparent from the preceding discussion, republican ideas have many theoretical presuppositions, the basis of which may run counter to the aims of communitarian philosophy.

The most obvious problem for communitarians is that the exclusivity of republicanism runs counter to the inclusiveness of communitarianism. We can see this in the meaning given firstly to the notion of ‘community’ and secondly to the restrictions placed on access to ‘citizenship’ within that community. On the first point, you will recall how Rousseau defined republican democracy in terms of a small homogenous and simple community. The ‘community’ is necessarily exclusive simply because in its self-definition it must draw a line between insiders and outsiders. As Shapiro puts it:

although republican and communitarian arguments are typically defended by an appeal to the benefits of membership for the included, they are equally mechanisms of exclusion. Indeed their mere existence as valued communities requires the existence of outsiders who are devalued (Shapiro 1990: 459).

Shapiro’s point is a powerful one. Republicanism’s ‘organic’ notion of community (Gey 1993: 811-821) *depends* for its meaning as much in terms of

¹⁰² Some authors, such as Rorty, may be surprised to find themselves included in this list. Communitarian-republican theorising has been popular in legal theory circles. In this respect one would add to Christodoulidis’ list the names of Sunstein (1985, 1988, 1990a, 199b and 1991), Sherry (1995), and Michelman (1986), as representatives.

who is deemed not to belong, as it does on who is to be included.¹⁰³ In addition, the republican community needs to be fairly static. It requires a degree of permanence, so that “through a long common history ... members of the community can develop the “ties of friendship and cooperation” that are necessary to republicanism” (Gey 1993: 818). It is not a big step from an exclusive, relatively static notion of ‘community’ to nationalism, ‘parochial prejudice’ and Machiavellian expansionism- most of which would not have worried the likes of Rousseau and Machiavelli, but would hardly appeal to the egalitarianism of communitarian thinkers (Shapiro 1990: 459).

Secondly, if republican ‘community’ is exclusive, republican ‘citizenship’ is even more so. Citizens in the republic are not merely members of the community, they are an exclusive subset of the community. The republican community is comfortable, bound by the ties of ‘friendship’ that can only arise from personal interaction and history. Republican citizenship in its original formulation, was even more of an exclusive ‘club’, bound by the ties of property and commerce on the one hand, and gender on the other.

In the medieval Italian republics, citizenship was limited to propertied male adult members of the community. Property ownership remained a strong element of many later republican formulations of the franchise. Women, too, were excluded from republican citizenship. Rousseau was charitable enough to drop property ownership from his notion of the democratic republican citizenry, but not the exclusion of women. He justified this on the grounds that women were incapable of the civic virtue, and the consequent rationality, required of citizens. For Rousseau, it appears that feminine virtue is more vulnerable than that of men. The example of Julie shows that feminine virtue, once lost, can never be retrieved. It was acceptable that Julie, whilst a girl, could be inconstant and overwhelmed by

¹⁰³ See further: Hindess (1991: 176-179).

her passions. When she marries, however, any loss of self-control would permanently destroy her now feminine virtue (Rousseau 1968: 3).

The range of feminist critiques of this aspect of his work have perhaps been the most vital area of Rousseau scholarship in recent times.¹⁰⁴ His disqualification of women from the realm of civic virtue, at the same time as he extols the importance of virtue in women is predicated on a view of feminine virtue as spatially limited to the realm of home and hearth (Weiss 1987, and 1990: 605). Within this realm, feminine virtue, particularly that of 'modesty', may operate.¹⁰⁵ The public realm, in which Rousseauian republican democracy takes place, requires greater self-control and greater civic virtue than is conceived as likely among women. Like the Greeks, Rousseau regards women as more dominated by the passions, and thus less capable of public as opposed to private virtue.¹⁰⁶

Can't we just redefine republican 'citizens' and 'communities' so that they are less exclusive? No doubt this is the motive behind attempts to 'update' the republican creed for a contemporary liberal society.¹⁰⁷ It is doubtful, however, that such models could, in the end, share much with the model of republicanism that has been outlined in this chapter. Indeed, it has been argued that the resulting 'republicanism' "is hardly worthy of the name. ... [I]t is merely traditional liberalism masquerading as republican reconciliation" (Sherry 1995: 141).

¹⁰⁴ The range of feminist perspectives on the Rousseauian sexual differentiation is extremely broad. See, for example: Shklar 1978, and (1969); Okin (1979); Pateman (1989 esp: 71-89); through to Elshtain (1986 esp: chapter 4); Weiss and Harper (1990); Weiss (1990); and Weiss (1987). Also Schwartz (1985).

¹⁰⁵ The principal function of Rousseauian modesty is the maintenance of masculine interest through a process of both seduction and denial. My thanks to John McCrystal on this point.

¹⁰⁶ See Rodgers (1992: 34-35).

¹⁰⁷ See for example: Sunstein (1988: 1566-1571), Gardbaum (1992: 750-751), and Hoeweler (1992: 878-881).

Exclusivity in both community and citizenship is an essential part of the republican vision of the self-governing community. ‘Adding women’ for example, to the citizenry will not get around the fact that republicanism requires citizens to be both virtuous and, as a consequence, rational. But, as has been argued by feminists on many occasions, ‘rationality’ itself is deeply inscribed with gender. It is, to put it bluntly, a ‘masculine’ virtue. Women and other excluded persons cannot be added to republican citizenship and communities without divorcing republicanism from its intellectual foundations or developing a more gender-neutral account of rationality.

The aspect of the republican model that appeals most to communitarians and that is the core of this chapter, civic virtue, is also the one that raises the most fundamental problems. This manifests itself in at least two issues: the question of universal truths, and the purpose of civic virtue. It is indisputable that republicanism as it has been outlined in this chapter relies upon “abstract and universal ethical truths” (Sherry 1995: 138) as the basis of civic virtue. ‘Good’ and ‘bad’ in republican theory, whether it applies to acts, passions or governmental forms, are not relative terms. Virtue, the product of good acts, is an absolute. So for that matter is the meaning and value of democracy. As we have seen, republicans like Rousseau are comfortable in making value judgements across any location, culture, polity, sex-divide, or time, because they are confident that their criteria for judging are universally applicable.

As both Galston and Sherry note, communitarian ‘republicans’ reject the notion of universal ethical truths. They “all question the significance of absolute or transcendent standards for distinguishing correct from incorrect moral and political judgements” (Galston 1994: 357). In doing this they are at once accepting “liberal (and postmodernist) ... denial of even the possibility of any abstract and universal ethical truths” while still wanting to “impose community values on individuals” (Sherry 1995: 138-139). Ultimately this leaves

communitarian republicans with an unfettered particularist notion of virtue, which does not have the restraints that a universal understanding provides. Virtue in the republican universal understanding is clear, and can be judged accordingly. Virtue in the communitarian particularist understanding will always be relative to community standards and, hence, cannot be judged as good or bad, except by those standards.¹⁰⁸ This runs counter to the whole republican argument. “It is no wonder”, Sherry writes, “that attempts to appropriate it [republicanism] for the political left have been conspicuously unsuccessful. ... Neo-republicans cannot have it both ways” (Sherry 1995: 140).¹⁰⁹

In addition to differences over the universality or particularity of virtue, it is equally clear that civic virtue has a different purpose in communitarian thinking when compared with the republican thought covered in this chapter. Civic virtue in republican thought is vital in the theorising of the realisation of the democratic republic. It is crucial to republicans as the tool for holding back the inevitable forces of decay in society and in politics. The motivation behind civic virtue is, therefore, as a means of securing the stability and future of the good democratic republic.

It seems unlikely that communitarians would share the original fearful republican purpose behind civic virtue. The original fear of instability, while backed up by notions of time and inevitable change, was influenced by religious notions of the ‘fallen’ nature of man and the practical observation that the Ancient republics had decayed (Pocock 1975: 75-76). To all of this was added the social,

¹⁰⁸ We will return to the relationship between relativism and democratic theory in Chapter Six.

¹⁰⁹ Sherry goes further to argue that as civic virtue is, in the republican model, a characteristic of the individual, it is logical to say that the republican polity will reward the virtuous individual more than the unvirtuous one. As a consequence, equality of *outcome* in republican political theory is not an appropriate goal, whereas equality of opportunity clearly is. This, Sherry believes, also runs counter to the communitarian commitment to equality of outcomes (Sherry 1995: 140).

political and religious turmoil of Renaissance Europe during the formation of early republican thought. By contrast, it is doubtful that many communitarians would subscribe to a notion of humans as 'fallen' beings, and the reality is that the American polity, in which communitarianism is based, has been relatively stable for over two hundred years. Despite its republican roots, this polity is predominantly liberal in its structure.

There is no reason to believe that communitarians share with republicans the same fear for the stability of their preferred political form. It is reasonable to suspect that communitarians have turned to civic virtue as a means of realising a *renewal in the sense of community*, rather than as a means of realising the stable, good democratic republic. Renewal of the sense of community is, as we have seen, part of the communitarian critique of liberalism. To this author, it appears that the motivation behind recent interest in civic virtue by communitarians is quite different from that of their republican counterparts.

It is understandable that civic virtue would have superficial appeal to people wishing to renew a sense of community, because it demands that a citizen acts for the benefit of the community. A problem arises, however, when one realises that civic virtue is generated by self-imposed constraint. How this sits with a concern for the safeguarding of civil liberties is unclear. It is also unclear how individual civil liberties can be balanced against the community values that go into civic virtue. Republicanism emphasises government as enforcer of the General Will over the particular wills. This means that individual freedoms are clearly fettered by the actions consequent upon the General Will. Civil liberties in this regard are contingent, as only the General Will can be in the field of government action. This aspect, Gey argues, makes it hard to reconcile the communitarian concern for civil liberties with republicanism (Gey 1993: 803).

There are many aspects of the republican model that are apparently incompatible with the ideals of communitarian philosophy. Republicanism, with

its language of virtue and community, is seductive in its way, but it is, as has been noted by many commentators,¹¹⁰ essentially a conservative doctrine, incompatible at its core with progressive political thought. Republicanism presents problems to those such as communitarian philosophers, who seek to use it as a prescriptive tool for reforming contemporary liberal democracies. Republicanism as a body of theory depends on inter-related concepts with specific meanings. These concepts include the notions of community and citizen, of virtue and liberty. They all present integrative challenges to people who are using republicanism as ammunition in a critique of liberalism. These challenges arise from the fact that republicanism is, by its own definition, a conservative, inward-looking doctrine. It is conservative by impulse, in that it seeks to stand *against* change, which it equates with degeneration. It is inward-looking at both the societal and individual levels. Republican societies, 'communities', define themselves by exclusion. The focus of a republican's attention is on the inside of the republic, not on those left out. The republican citizen also looks inward, as *he* wrestles with himself to become civilly virtuous.

It is inappropriate to use republican arguments with regards to the general desirability of democracy without addressing the question of the civic virtue that supports it. This, in turn, requires one to deal with the ideas of self-control, of rationality, of individual moral autonomy, of citizenship, of repressive relations between governmental structures and the population, of the highly unsatisfactory position of the feminine within all of this, and so on. One cannot look to republicanism for freedom without recognising that freedom within republican democracy arises from self-imposed constraint. To abuse further a much abused phrase from the *Social Contract*, communitarians should ask themselves: am I ready to force *myself* to be free?

¹¹⁰ For example, see Sherry (1995), Gey (1993), and Rodgers (1992).

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the republican notion of democracy, with a focus on the theoretical tools used by republican theorists to realise the democratic republic. The historiographical literature is inadequate in its discussion of republican democratic theory, because the vital place of civic virtue is ignored. We have seen that republicans are committed both to democracy as a political system and to the idea of inevitable degenerative change. This commitment forces republicans to find tools that will uphold the democratic republic against change, or else it will be consigned merely to a romantic ideal. One tool, law, is insufficient *in itself* to promote a democratic republic that is both stable and *good*. Civic virtue is the tool used by republicans to perform both tasks.

Republicans conceive of 'democracy' in very Classical terms. Recent republicans take democracy as a given in the republican model, despite there being a strong historical tradition of aristocratic republicanism. *Ideally*, republican democracy is direct, participative and inclusive. Unlike the Greeks discussed in Chapter Two, however, republicans consider democracy to be both a legitimate form of government, and the 'best' form of republican government.

A problem for republicans is that they have jettisoned the Greek notion of circular societal change in favour of a characteristically modern linear, unidirectional notion. This notion they couple to a belief that most change will be degenerative. This leaves republicans in a bind, because their most preferred model of government, democracy, is also considered the most vulnerable to degenerative change. If they are committed to building a democratic republic, they have to find a way of avoiding this problem. This they find in the notion of civic virtue.

The republican model of civic virtue draws much of its inspiration from Classical sources. The production of civic virtue stands as a bulwark against

degenerative change, or may even restore virtue to fallen polities. The production of civic virtue binds the republic together by both restraining destructive degenerative actions and by preventing the particular will from clouding the General Will. Civic virtue shares, therefore, much with the Classical notion, in that its manifestation is in the restraint of an individual's public actions. Republicans such as Rousseau go further than the Greeks, however, to argue that the restraint of an individual's actions arises from the indirect control of the passions.

The republican paradox is exemplified by the thought of Rousseau. Democracy is the best form of social and political organisation, but, *in general* it is beyond the reach of mere mortals. What hinders democrats is not the system, but the raw material: not so much the human beings that form the body politic, but the social beings that we have become. Above all else, Rousseauan democracy requires civic virtue from its citizens, a virtue that, both in kind and degree, Rousseau found lacking in society around him. In his inimitable style, Rousseau includes himself as an example of a *vicious* particular individual, who lacked the sense of duty required of a virtuous citizen:

[i]n all matters constraint and compulsion are unbearable to me; they would make me dislike even pleasure. It is said that among the Mohammedans a man goes through the streets at dawn to command all husbands to do their duty by their wives. At that hour I should be a bad Turk (Rousseau 1953: 183-184)!¹¹¹

On this note, I now turn to the next chapter, which examines the dominant force in democratic theory, liberalism.

¹¹¹ See also Rousseau (1979- esp the 'Fourth Walk': 68).

CHAPTER FOUR

Virtue Replaced: Institutional Design and Liberal Democratic Theory

*Quis custodiet custodes?**

The great political superstition of the past was the divine right of kings. The great political superstition of the present is the divine right of parliaments (Spencer 1982: 123).

This chapter is about the realisation of liberal democracy. At the close of the previous chapter, we saw that republican democratic theory solves the perceived problems with realising democracy by demanding that the citizenry be virtuous, and, in so doing, constrain their destructive actions, and perhaps passions. For republicans, the realisation of democracy is a desirable but doubtful exercise. Liberalism, the dominant political theory of the last three centuries, has a different relationship with democracy. Democracy is not uniformly regarded by liberals as desirable nor necessary for the realisation of liberalism. Further, while republican democratic theory is a theory about the political life of the citizenry, liberal democratic theory is a theory about government and its relationship with the citizenry.

Republican democratic theory requires citizens to constrain themselves in order that democracy be realised. By contrast, this chapter argues that liberal democratic theory requires that democracy itself be constrained, in order that it be realised. This stems from a desire both to minimise the constraints placed on individuals, and to contain politics to the sphere of government, which has an elevated and separate role from the individual and community. Democracy, in

* “Who will guard the guardians?” (Juvenal).

liberal democratic theory, is the mediating device between government and the individual. Democracy is realised through constraining institutional structures, that, in republican terms, produce virtue-like effects, without the citizenry individually having to be virtuously self-controlled. Virtue is not necessary in liberal democratic theory for democracy to be realised. Instead, what is needed, is the right kind of political institutions and consequent practices. Liberal democratic theory, therefore, has a much more mechanical approach to the realisation of democracy, than the republican approach.

In structure, this chapter will firstly discuss the notions of liberalism and liberal democracy, and then outline the historiographical literature's account of liberal democratic theory. It is noted that the dominance of liberalism generally, and liberal democratic theory in particular, produces a high level of clarity and consensus among the historiographical authors about the definition and justification of liberal democracy. This extends through the accounts of the historical roots of liberal democratic theory, and the theories of liberal democratic practice that developed in the postwar era. It is argued that realisation rarely raises its head in the historiographical literature's account of liberal democratic theory.

Following our discussion of the historiographical literature's account of liberal democracy, we turn to considering the ways in which liberals theorise the realisation of democracy. This is done by examining a representative sample of early liberal democratic thought to illustrate clearly the ways in which the realisation of liberal democracy is theorised. The works of James Mill and his son John Stuart Mill¹¹² are considered in detail in this chapter, as they represent, in prototype, two competing tendencies in liberal democratic theory. These tendencies lay the foundations for two distinct types of liberal democratic thought,

¹¹² Hereafter JS Mill.

often described as ‘protective’ and ‘developmental’ respectively. These strands are found to share a number of common assumptions about the realisation of democracy, as well as each possessing some distinctive features.

The discussion of the two Mills provides us with examples of the enduring liberal theoretical approach to the realisation of democracy through its institutional constraint. So successful has this approach been, that recent liberal democratic theory has become largely indifferent to the issue of theorising the realisation of democracy. This is confirmed in a brief examination of the recent literature on democratisation, which shows that early liberal assumptions about the realisation of democracy remain strong, but submerged, in later theories of liberal democracy. With this completed, our analysis of the place of realisation in democratic theory turns to liberalism’s great rival, socialism.

Defining liberalism and liberal democracy

Before proceeding to our examination of the historiographical literature and the ways in which the two Mills theorised the realisation of democracy, I want to dwell for a moment on the meaning of liberalism and to lay to rest the notion that liberalism is undefinable. Clearly if the latter were the case, there would be no point proceeding further with this chapter, as we would merely end up in the ‘mutual opposition of gross concepts’ discussed in the previous chapter.

The focus of this thesis, the issue of realisation in democratic theory, requires an examination of how thinkers of each major school approach this issue. This in turn requires something of an understanding of each school’s main philosophical tenets. As we will see, the historiographical literature’s commentary on liberalism and liberal democracy is quite extensive and consistent. It could be argued by some that the historiographical literature’s picture of liberalism and liberal democratic theory as united bodies of theory, glosses over a fragmented reality. However, the allegation of fragmentation is, I believe, something of a

chimera, produced by the nature of liberal theory, and amplified by liberal scholarship.

Individualism, the cornerstone of liberalism, finds expression in the very inability of scholars to agree on what liberalism means, even in general terms. Substantial space is occupied in some works on liberalism discussing various methods of approaching a definition of liberalism. Other authors, of course, believe that liberalism can be defined, but even here we find more heat than light. For example, in recent times, liberalism has been defined in terms of one of a combination of, the following: political structures,¹¹³ culture,¹¹⁴ philosophy,¹¹⁵ values,¹¹⁶ morality,¹¹⁷ and economics.¹¹⁸ Little wonder then, that Haakonssen writes that liberalism is “a notoriously ambiguous concept” (Haakonssen 1998a: xi). For the purposes of this thesis, however, I follow Macpherson’s well-known definition of liberalism as a theory of “possessive individualism”:

(1) Man, the individual, is seen as absolute natural proprietor of his own capacities, owing nothing to society for them. Man’s essence is freedom to use his capacities in search of satisfactions. This freedom is limited properly only by some principle of utility or utilitarian natural law which forbids harming others. Freedom therefore is restricted to, and comes to be identified with, domination over things, not domination over men. The clearest form of domination over things is the relation of ownership or possession. Freedom is therefore possession. Everyone is free, so everyone possesses at least his own capacities. (2) Society is seen, not (as it had been) as a system of relations of domination and subordination between men and classes held together by reciprocal rights and duties, but as a lot of free equal individuals related to each other through their possessions, that is, related as owners of their own capacities and of what they have produced and accumulated by the use of their capacities. The relation of exchange (the market relation) is seen as the fundamental relation of society. Finally (3) political society is

¹¹³ See for example: Morely (1921), Levine (1978 and 1981), Lawrence (1989), Hindess (1993), Bobbio (1990).

¹¹⁴ See for example: Parekh (1993).

¹¹⁵ See for example: Arblaster (1984), Beiner (1996), Gottfried (1995), Shusterman (1994).

¹¹⁶ See for example: Hollinger (1996), Holmes (1995), Johnston (1994).

¹¹⁷ See for example: Reiman (1994).

¹¹⁸ See for example: Macpherson (1962 and 1977), MacIntyre (1976) and Bobbio (1987).

seen as a rational device for the protection of property, including capacities; even life and liberty are considered as possessions, rather than as social rights with correlative duties (Macpherson 1973: 199).

Some authors, such as Minogue, argue that to come up with a definition of liberalism, however broad, is inappropriate. Such definitions, it is argued, deny the historically contingent nature of the subject material. There is no liberal 'essence'. Minogue argues that liberalism ought not be viewed as a single, static, identifiable body of theory, but rather as "a political practice in which reason is brought to bear upon political and social arrangements so that they can be continuously modified according to what individuals judge ought to be done" (Minogue 1988: 196). Such a view of liberalism leads him to argue that:

[i]t is only a timeless, formularised or theorised liberalism that is vulnerable to historical revision. ... To immerse ourselves in historical particularities may be not to find liberalism but to educate us in understanding the soil ... in which it grew. The one virtue impossible for a liberal is - purity (Minogue 1988: 197-198).

Liberalism in this view is atomised. What has been spoken of as the liberal 'tradition' (Haakonssen 1988: viii; Bobbio 1987: 104), ought to be viewed not as a united corpus of theory, but as a collection of the thoughts of individuals responding rationally to their environment.

In my view, Minogue's complete denial of a liberal 'essence' overstates the issue. Individual differences among liberals clearly do exist, but these only become insurmountable when they are viewed entirely relative to one another. The liberal wood in this approach becomes merely a collection of trees, where variety relative to one another seems endless. This relativity is important because a wood is a wood despite its internal differences.

Minogue confuses variety with absolute difference. What we see in liberal thought over time are variations on the same themes. The precise meaning given to particular liberal themes varies from author to author, as does the value placed upon these. Some themes that were important at one time cease to be important at others, or are excluded altogether. This can be seen in Locke's reliance on

revelatory Christianity as the basis of his doctrine of rights and the rule of law (S. Letwin 1988: 3-28). Later liberals would not be comfortable with this. Other themes such as the breadth of the franchise or the place of welfare in the liberal state arose long after the liberal 'tradition' had begun (Holmes 1995: 11-12 and 13-41). It seems reasonable to accept that while later liberals are contributing to a coherent body of theory, they are not identical to their forebears. This means that recent liberalism is similarly not identical to earlier versions, but remains part of the same family.

As an extension of the view that liberalism may be treated as a relatively united corpus of theory, I would argue that liberal democratic theory should be similarly regarded. Although liberal democratic theorists may not like to think so, scholars who write about liberal democratic theory tend to agree upon the major identifying features of, and variants to, such theory. This, of course, allows the historiographical authors and others to write their accounts of this theory. What emerges is a consensus that, firstly, there is such a thing as liberal democracy (which must come as a relief to those living in one) and, secondly, that liberal democratic theory is identifiable, if diverse. This diversity is represented by most authors as an extension of the protective/developmental bifurcation that occurred in the nineteenth century.¹¹⁹ Some, like Macpherson, present a double bifurcation (ie four models of liberal democracy (Macpherson 1977)), others like Bellamy (1994) and Ware (1992) argue that liberal democracy should be viewed as a unitary concept, but that it is only one version of the representative democratic model. Thus, while there is much diversity of opinion about the content of liberal democratic theory, there is little disagreement about its existence. To flesh out

¹¹⁹ See for example: Arblaster (1984: 75-79), Bealey (1993), Bobbio (1990), Elazar (1995), Held (1992: 15-17), Hindess (1993: 301), Hollinger (1996), Levine (1981), Riley (1988), and Weithman (1995).

the content of this theory, I now turn to an examination of the historiographical literature's account of it.

The historiographical literature on liberal democratic theory

Liberal democratic theory dominates the historical literature on democratic theory. This dominance extends beyond merely the space devoted explicitly to liberal democratic theory to the very literature itself. As we saw in Chapter One, the environment in which the historiographical literature has been written is one dominated by the ideology of liberalism and by the political structures of liberal democracy. Further, many of the histories of democratic theory could be said to have a political purpose, namely to provide justificatory ammunition for defending contemporary liberal democratic political systems, or a reasonable alternative. It is not surprising, then, that liberal democratic theory is so pervasive in the historiographical literature.

The dominance of liberal democratic theory has both positive and negative consequences. On the positive side, the historiographical literature's account of liberal democratic theory is very consistent, and the meaning of liberalism and its relationship with democracy cause little disagreement. At the core of their accounts of liberalism is a series of preoccupations, namely: individualism, liberty and, the role of the State. The varying meanings and values ascribed to these liberal preoccupations appear to determine the ways in which the relationship with democracy is described. A negative consequence is that contemporary liberal democratic theory's relative indifference to the issue of realisation is reflected in the historiographical literature's treatment of liberal democratic theory as a whole.

Overall, it is fair to say that the historiographical literature delivers a strong coverage of two of the four criteria we identified earlier as essential to a history of democratic theory, namely liberal democracy's definition and justification. In

addition, there is some partial coverage of the conditions considered necessary for achieving liberal democracy, in the first instance. The fourth criterion, the central preoccupation of this thesis, is the way in which the realisation of liberal democracy has been theorised. On this issue, a few of the historians of democratic theory have put forward arguments about the social, political, economic and psychological conditions thought necessary for a stable liberal democratic system. At one level, these constitute an attempt to present a theoretical statement about the realisation of liberal democracy. However, there is an extra dimension to the issue of the realisation of liberal democracy that is not discussed in the historiographical literature. This relates to the way in which early liberal democrats defined democracy so that it can be realised.

How does the historiographical literature understand liberalism and liberal democratic theory? Many historians of democratic theory do not mention the word 'liberalism' at all. Instead, they talk of 'democracy' and 'democratic theory' and compare these with other such theories as 'classical' or 'social' democracy and their theories. Hence, the liberal basis for 'democratic theory' is often apparently invisible.¹²⁰ This is symptomatic of a particular mode of scholarship which places liberalism, its institutions and theories at the centre of scholastic enquiry.¹²¹ Pennock unconsciously illustrates this in his article "Democratic Political Theory - A Typological Discussion" (1971). Despite noting that such theory is "notoriously a hodgepodge" (Pennock 1971: 61), he still finds it possible to develop a four-way system for categorising 'types' of democratic theory. Almost as an aside, he notes that he is only looking at liberal

¹²⁰ It is most apparent in the so-called empirical or realist school of behavioural political science. See Skinner (1973), Kirkpatrick (1981), and Ware (1992: 130).

¹²¹ Again, it is most apparent in the so-called empirical or realist school of behavioural political science. See Skinner (1973), Kirkpatrick (1981), Cohen (1971), Brown (1920), Hattersley (1930), Lipson (1964), Mayo (1960), and Pennock (1979).

democratic theory (Pennock 1971: 61).¹²² Not only is ‘democratic theory’ really only liberal democratic theory, but liberal democratic theory itself may be classified and studied in the abstract, referring only to its “assumptions both as to fact and as to value” (Pennock 1971: 62). Theories of liberal democracy, Pennock seems to be arguing, may be studied purely on their own terms. As argued we have just seen in the case of Minogue’s non-definition of liberalism, however, when the range of options is narrow, small differences can be magnified unnecessarily.

Some historians of democratic theory are more explicit in identifying the liberal roots of what is often merely termed democratic theory. “Very simply” Sartori writes, “liberalism is the theory and practice of individual liberty, juridical defence and the constitutional state” (Sartori 1965: 364). Liberalism is presented in the historiographical literature as having its roots in the “medieval problem of ... the relationship between state and society, between the spheres of political authority and individual autonomy” (Hallowell 1954: 69).

Liberalism arose in the seventeenth century as a response to medieval absolutism and the strictures of the mercantile economy. Held notes that liberalism:

sought to restrict the powers of the state and to define a uniquely private sphere independent of state action. At the centre of this project was the goal of freeing civil society (personal, family and business life) from political interference and the simultaneous delimitation of the state’s authority (Held 1987: 41).

Liberalism posits an economic creed centred around the market economy, and a political creed centred on the primacy of the autonomous, rational and competitive individual who possesses a series of natural rights, in particular the rights to “life, liberty and property” (Macpherson 1973: 224). Society is seen as

¹²² Pateman goes further to argue that not only is ‘democracy’ often used to signify ‘liberal democracy’, she argues that even when ‘liberal’ is added to ‘democracy’, what is usually meant is “*American Liberal Democracy*” (Pateman 1986a: 375 - original emphasis).

an aggregation of these individuals and the role of the state, therefore, is to manage the interactions between individuals so that each can access his or her natural rights to the same extent as the next.

How does the historiographical literature view the relationship between liberalism and democracy? There is no necessary link between liberalism and democracy. Macpherson argues that “the liberal democracies we know were liberal first and democratic later” (Macpherson 1972: 6).¹²³ Lipson believes that often liberalism and democracy may have run in parallel with one another, but they are not the same thing (Lipson 1964:70). Sartori agrees that liberalism and democracy have different origins, but argues that “in the second half of the nineteenth century the liberal and the democratic ideal blended with each other ... [and in] their blending [they] became confused” (Sartori 1965: 353). He goes on to argue that, in practice, there is no alternative realisable form of democracy to liberal democracy (Sartori 1965: 460-461). This is despite there being some potential conflict between liberalism as a theory of individual liberty and democracy, which to the extent that it “revolves around the ideal of equality ... may depart from liberalism” (Sartori 1965: 354).

It is rare for historians of democratic theory to dwell on individual thinkers to draw out their theory of democracy. Instead, there is a tendency to present a gloss over liberal democratic theory itself, to draw out salient themes. This reluctance to focus on key thinkers separates liberal democratic theory from other forms of democratic theory discussed in the historiographical literature. It may be that this reluctance is a product of the disparate nature of liberalism itself:

in contrast to socialism, which for the last century or so has been identified with the work of one thinker, ... liberalism is a movement in the history of ideas which develops via a host of writers quite distinct from each other, such as Locke, Montesquieu, Kant, Adam

¹²³ Strictly speaking, Macpherson would generally be regarded as more of an historian of liberalism and liberal democracy than democratic theory, but his work has applications in the broader field of democratic theory in general (see for example: Macpherson (1972)).

Where historians of democratic theory do focus on individual thinkers, it is primarily on Hobbes, Locke and JS Mill.¹²⁴ Held, for example, isolates two strands in liberal democratic thought. The origins of the first strand, 'protective democracy', he associates with Hobbes and Locke. This strand shares a distrust of the state, and regards democracy as a means of placing a check on the state. The second strand, 'developmental democracy', he identifies primarily with JS Mill (Held 1987: 35-104). In this strand, the state is regarded as a potentially positive agent, capable by its actions of enhancing the democratic capacities of the citizenry.

Hobbes, Held argues, presents a "quite illiberal" response to a proto-liberal preoccupation with the need to establish the conditions for the liberty of the individual (Held 1987: 50). Hobbes seeks to achieve these conditions by means of his oft-discussed 'social contract'. This contract is a vertical arrangement by which individuals in society contract with the all-powerful state, surrendering their natural rights so as to secure a kind of uniform equality of condition. In such a condition, the state of nature, the war of each on all is ameliorated. Rule by the leviathan state is legitimate, because the people have consented to it. It could even be argued that the state is representative, because Hobbes viewed it, the Sovereign, as a corporate body, comprised of, and speaking and acting for the many interests of the consenting parties (Held 1987: 50). Thus, Hobbes' solution to the medieval problem is to elevate and legitimise the power of the state in order that the individual is protected from other individuals.

¹²⁴ These liberals are, however, typically positioned on a liberal continuum, at one extreme is the minimalist protective state, at the other, the more interventionist developmental state, with the possibility of a welfarist function. Historians such as Held (1987) also make brief reference to the thought of De Tocqueville, the American Federalists and the utilitarian thought of Bentham and James Mill.

While Hobbes is regarded as being a proto-liberal, it is Locke who is regarded as the intellectual founder of the idea of the limited constitutional state, founded on the equal consent of the governed and the legitimate use of public power. Locke, like Hobbes, uses the device of the social contract to found his notion of the legitimate state. Unlike Hobbes, however, Locke's 'horizontal' contract is between individuals, not with the state.¹²⁵ The agreement formed by the individuals gives the state the power to govern, but does not involve the ceding of natural rights to it. The state's function is to protect the rights of individuals in society through the use of Executive power. A limited right to revolt is acknowledged, should the state fail to perform its functions, or become too invasive of individual rights. For this reason, Hattersley argues that "the community could thus retain supreme authority, whilst the government became a trustee ultimately accountable to the sovereign people" (Hattersley 1930: 139). Locke, therefore, addresses the relationship between the individual and the state by elevating the individual, who consents to a certain curtailment of his or her rights for the purpose of securing them into the future.

Although Locke provides an argument for a limited state resting on the consent of the people, he is not himself presented as an unqualified democrat. Held argues that Locke's relationship with the idea of democracy is "rudimentary" and that "he cannot, in the end, be considered a democrat without careful qualification" (Held 1987: 54-55). However, for many liberal democrats, Locke is the foundation scholar of liberal democracy: "[his] ideas have become part and parcel of the liberal democratic creed" (Pennock 1979: 125). We can see this in the definitions of liberal democracy given in the historiographical literature. For example: "[liberal] democracy can be called that government of the people which

¹²⁵ On the distinction between vertical and horizontal contracts, see Arendt (1970a: 85-86).

is conducted by representatives of their choosing on their behalf and under their ultimate control” (Lipson 1964: 569). Or again, liberal democracy requires:

popular control of decision makers; ... political equality ... institutionalised as the equality of all adult citizens to vote; ... [the constitutional protection of] political freedoms; ... [and] when the representatives are divided, the decision of the majority prevails (Mayo 1960: 61-67).

The role of the state is a vital concern to liberals generally, and to liberal democrats in particular. Held argues that JS Mill was pivotal in challenging the Lockean distrust of the state, instead arguing that it could be a positive agent for the development of the democratic community. Held argues that JS Mill saw the role for the state as more than just protecting individual rights. JS Mill’s arguments are seen as having a distinct democratic edge, in that he saw democratic institutions as ensuring the legitimacy of the liberal state. Democracy exercised in representative institutions by an active citizenry results in a good, restrained government. Thus, the size and activity of the state should be limited to the extent that is necessary to ensure that the liberty of individuals is fully developed. JS Mill, not unproblematically, extends this notion to include women.¹²⁶

While many historians of democratic theory do not dwell on specific liberal democratic theorists,¹²⁷ their understanding of the meaning and roots of liberal democracy is consistent with the above discussion. Liberal democratic theory is a theory about the medieval problem of the relationship between the individual and the state. This relationship is resolved in liberal democratic theory into one in which the operations of political institutions constitute the democratic process. Democracy *is* voting, elections, political parties, pressure groups, representative institutions etc. We see this most strongly when the historiographical literature

¹²⁶ See Held (1987: 97-104).

¹²⁷ These are mostly the earlier historians. See for example: Cohen (1971), Lipson (1964), Mayo (1960), Pennock (1979), Sartori (1965).

turns from the roots of liberal democratic theory to postwar theorising of the practices of democracy in liberal democratic societies, such as the USA.

The postwar ‘democratic theory’ discussed by many historians of democratic theory represents, in this author’s view, a shift in focus, but not departure, from the protective-developmental range of liberal democratic theory outlined above. Liberal democracy is understood to be a system that mediates the relationship between citizens and the separate sphere of government. The self-defined purpose of postwar liberal democratic *theory* is presented as largely shifting from *justifying* liberal democracy (‘normative’ democratic theory) to describing the *operations* of liberal democratic systems (‘operational’ or ‘realist’ democratic theory). As Pennock notes, most ‘democratic theory’ done today is of the latter type, focussing on quasi ‘scientific’ measurements of ‘political experience’ “from which can be derived testable propositions” about political behaviour (Pennock 1979: xx).

The two dominant postwar liberal democratic theories, pluralism and competitive élitism are presented in the historiographical literature as providing variations on the way in which democracy is thought to perform its mediating role. Both pluralism and competitive élite theory, Margolis notes, emphasise the “common view of democracy as procedure” (Margolis 1983: 124). The purpose of democratic theory for both of these forms of liberal democratic theory is to describe operationally the functioning of liberal democratic systems. The principal difference between the two, Margolis argues, lies not in what they conceive democracy to be, but in how it is understood to be operating in existing liberal democracies (Margolis 1983: 124).

Pluralism shares a belief that democracy may be described operationally as a system in which minorities, especially interest groups, may ‘rule’, by influencing

government (Margolis (1983: 119-120)).¹²⁸ As Held puts it, the key assumption of pluralism is that in a democratic society:

power is non-hierarchically and competitively arranged. It is an inextricable part of an 'endless process of bargaining' between numerous groups representing different interests, including, for example, business organisations, trade unions, political parties, ethnic groups, students, prison officers, women's institutes, religious groups (Held 1987: 189).

The democratic process is about ensuring that all interests can compete for influence over government, but that government itself remains in a sphere separate from democracy. While pluralism has had its share of critics,¹²⁹ it remains powerful in the historiographical literature on democratic theory.

At the other end of the postwar liberal democratic theoretical spectrum lies competitive élite theory. This theory, it is noted, stems from the works of Schumpeter and Downs (Miller 1983: 135). Democracy is, in this view:

a method or procedure by which, through a competitive struggle for sanctioned authority, some people are chosen to lead the political community. Democracy, then, is the product, or the sequence of effects (secondary and composite) that result from the adoption of that method (Sartori 1965: 124).

Competitive élitism understands democracy to be the mediating system through which leaders or government are formed and dissolved by the people. Democracy is a 'technocratic' exercise, in which the role of political parties competing for control of governmental machinery dominates political practice (Held 1987: 143-185).

How does the historiographical literature's account of the roots of liberal democratic theory and its recent variations stack up against the four criteria we identified at the outset of this thesis, that contribute to democratic theory? I

¹²⁸ On pluralism see for example: Truman (1951), Almond (1960), Dahl (1956), Kornhauser (1959), Latham (1952), Dahl & Lindblom (1953), Lipset (1960), Polsby (1963) and Wildavsky (1962).

¹²⁹ See Held (1987: 186--220).

would argue that the historiographical literature does well on three of the four criteria. Firstly, it describes the roots of liberalism and the development of its relationship with the idea of democracy. It also describes liberal democratic theory's conception of what democracy is and how it works. Liberalism is defined as a theory of individual liberty and the limited state, and its basic understanding of democracy is also defined as a mediating system between the people and the government.

As well as defining the liberal theory of democracy, it can be inferred from the historiographical literature that liberal democracy may be theoretically justified in a number of ways. Justification for liberal democracy could be found in three forms: firstly, in terms of the benefits it delivers directly to individuals (eg JS Mill); secondly, in moral terms,¹³⁰ however, the basis for this judgement appears to be liberalism itself, which would seem hardly to be likely to produce anything other than a ringing endorsement; or thirdly, merely by force of its own existence. The last form of justification emerges most strongly in the historiographical literature influenced by the 'operational' or 'realist' approach to the study of democracy. In a democratic theoretical version of the naturalistic fallacy,¹³¹ the valuing of the 'realistic' description of the 'what is', over the 'normative', 'what might/should be', was academically fashionable for much of the time that the historiographical literature has been in existence:

the most important reason for preferring a descriptive definition of democracy is that it leaves us talking about real governments run by real people in the real world. ... We know what we are talking about (Kirkpatrick 1981: 342).

¹³⁰ See for example: Lipson (1964: 592-594), Dahl (1956), Bachrach (1967), and Braybrooke (1968).

¹³¹ The argument that, that which exists needs no justification. Philosophically, some would argue that this is no fallacy, many others would argue, however, that the existence of a thing does not necessarily make it right, nor desirable, nor the only alternative worth discussing.

One gets the sense from some of the historiographical literature that liberal democracy may be justified on the grounds that it exists, and that the alternatives could well be worse or unrealisable.¹³²

While providing definitions and justifications of liberal democracy, the historical literature on democratic theory also provides a limited explanation of the third criterion, namely the liberal approach to the initial achievement of democracy. In the historical references to the thought of Hobbes and Locke, the social contract is identified as a hypothetical theoretical device for the achievement of the liberal (and perhaps liberal democratic) state.

If the historiographical literature's discussion of liberal democratic theory's approach to the achievement of democracy is partial, its account of the issue of realisation in liberal democratic theory is equally so. As we will see shortly, realisation is important in liberal democratic theory, but it is not always very visible. Only those historians who take a thematic approach, rather than the more common, schools-of-thought approach, address the issue of realisation at all. For example, Cohen identifies material, constitutional, intellectual, psychological and protective conditions for a stable democracy (Cohen 1971). Pennock identifies nine conditions: dignity, autonomy and respect for persons; belief in individual rights; trust, tolerance, and willingness to compromise; literacy and education; commitment to democratic procedures and values; public spirit; nationalism; consensus; and institutions (Pennock 1979). At one level one could view these conditions as a theoretical statement about the realisation of democracy. At another level, however, these conditions merely represent a reflection of the results shown by many postwar behavioural studies of operating liberal

¹³² See for example: Sartori (1965), Cohen (1971: 277-287), Mayo (1960: 279-310), and Hattersley (1930: 236-252).

democracies, such as the USA.¹³³ They are *descriptions* of the values of postwar American society *translated into* generalisations about the realisation of liberal democracy.¹³⁴ This is reflected in the fact that these thematic histories are the least dispassionate of all ‘histories’ of democratic theory. They are explicitly histories of democratic theory from a liberal democratic perspective.

As has been discussed, most historians of democratic theory make no attempt to discuss the issue of realisation in democratic theory at all. This reflects the prevailing realist/operational focus of many postwar democratic theorists on theorising existing stable democracies. They could well ask: why should one need to theorise the realisation of something that has been realised? The neglect of realisation in the historiographical literature is, in this sense, justified in relation to postwar liberal democratic theory. However, what is not justified is the extension of the postwar indifference to realisation to earlier liberal theories of democracy. Yet this is what I believe has happened. As we will see below, there is a need to acknowledge the extent to which the theoretical devices used by early liberal theorists of democracy in theorising the realisation of democracy, become constituent of the later liberal understandings of democracy itself. In other words, what may have begun as devices to realise democracy (such as voting, representation, separation of powers etc), later become defining features of liberal democracy itself. Unbeknownst to many liberal democratic theorists, therefore, realisation is intrinsic to the contemporary definition of liberal democracy.

¹³³ See for example: Almond and Verba’s classic study of political behaviour and cultural values (1965).

¹³⁴ We will revisit this point in the discussion of the literature on ‘democratisation’ toward the end of this chapter. This literature presents a richer analysis of the achievement of liberal democracy than that generally covered in the historiographical literature (Held 1993 is an exception). The democratisation literature, however, tends to conflate achieving democracy with realising it. This means that the realisation of democracy remains somewhat under-theorised.

The realisation of liberal democracy: James Mill's utilitarian theory of protective democracy

James Mill (1773-1836) is an underrated early liberal democratic theorist. He is best remembered not for his own works, but for his relationship with others: as the father of JS Mill; as the principal protégé of Jeremy Bentham; and the career-making target of his greatest critic, Thomas Babington Macaulay (Ball 1992: ix). The intriguing aspect of this picture of Mill is that it stands at odds with the value accorded to his work during his lifetime and the impact, whether acknowledged or not, it continues to have in contemporary theoretical debates.

Mill, according to Street, provides us with an exemplar of one of “two central strands in the history of democratic theory, [namely] ... ‘pluralist’ or ‘representative’ or ‘liberal’ democracy” (Street 1996: 205).¹³⁵ Mill was highly respected (and reviled) in his time: “his contemporaries, critics and admirers alike, stood in some awe of the elder Mill” (Ball 1992: xi). His contemporary influence “can be detected in the arguments of the Public Choice school [and] ... in the general suspicion of government and the preference for a consumer-based democracy of shareholders and internal markets” (Street 1996: 213). Mill was also one of the earliest and clearest exponents of the view that links liberalism (or a variant of it) with democracy (or a variant of it). In Mill we see the clear evidence of Sartori’s claim that liberalism and democracy became inextricably intertwined in the nineteenth century (Sartori 1965: 353).

In the following section we will be examining is Mill’s essay “Government” in some detail.¹³⁶ The key issue we will discuss in relation to Mill’s theory of democracy is the way in which he develops the idea that democratic structures

¹³⁵ The other strand he labels as ‘classical’ or participatory, and associates it with the thought of Jean-Jacques Rousseau.

¹³⁶ Mill (1992b) - first published in 1819.

may substitute for individual virtue to provide for the realisation of the desired outcome, namely a stable and 'good' (utility-maximising) polity. We will find that these structures rely in part on modifications to ideas that we have already come across in earlier chapters, in particular those of knowledge, community interest as opposed to 'sinister' interest (ie General versus Particular will), and restrictions on who was thought appropriate to participate in the democratic life of the community. Unlike earlier theorists discussed in this thesis, however, we also find in Mill a rejection of direct, in favour of representative, democracy, accompanied by a consequent focus on the role and functionings of its institutions. Democracy in Mill's vision is a very truncated technical exercise in electing and overseeing a government, when compared with the holistic democracy as a 'way of life' approach found in republican theory. Ultimately, however, Mill is unable to break free from the virtue-laden democratic theory of the past, and fails to follow through to the logical consequences of his argument.

Mill's technique of writing is deductive. He begins with a general theoretical principle, based on the utilitarian maxim that "the lot of every human being is determined by his pains and pleasures, and that his happiness corresponds with the degree in which his pleasures are great, and his pains are small" (Mill 1992b: 4). From this, Mill derives a structure for government, the goal of which is to ensure maximum happiness for the maximum number of people (Mill 1992b: 5). The 'good' polity is, from the outset, concerned not with abstract virtue but concrete happiness.

Government, Mill argues, is necessary to "protect one another" (Mill 1992b: 5). Protection is necessary for two interrelated reasons, firstly, the scarcity of the objects of human happiness and, secondly, the boundless desire of humans for happiness. People, Mill suggests, desire as much happiness as they can get, but nature has not provided all of us with supplies sufficient for satiating all of our desires (Mill 1992b: 4-5). We cannot find in nature, or in the products of our

work, all that we desire for happiness, because our desires are limitless (Mill 1992b: 12). As a consequence, he states, “it is obvious that every man, who has not all the objects of his desire, has inducement to take them from any man who is weaker than himself: and how is this to be prevented?” (Mill 1992b: 5). The only answer, he argues, is government.

It is important to note that right from the start, Mill regards government in a particularly liberal way. “The object”, he says, “it is plain, can best be attained when a great number of men combine, and delegate to a small number the power necessary for protecting them all. This is Government” (Mill 1992b: 5). Government has a protective function and operates with the delegated power of the community.

In addition to protecting citizens from one another, there is a second protective dimension in relation to government. This is the protection of the people from the government (Mill 1992b: 6). The members of a government, being people, are subject to the same desire for maximum happiness as other people. But their powerful position is such that they have the means to abuse their power for personal gain:

Whatever, then, are the reasons for establishing Government, the very same exactly are the reasons for establishing securities, that those entrusted with the powers necessary for protecting others make use of them for that purpose solely, and not for the purpose of taking from the members of the community the objects of desire (Mill 1992b: 6).

It is this second protective aspect of government that drives Mill toward favouring a particular model of democracy over all other governmental forms, democratic or otherwise. In keeping with a long tradition in political theory, Mill identifies three forms of government: democracy, aristocracy and monarchy. The latter two he rejects, as they will not protect the whole of the people from excessive government. Indeed, as Mill argues, in both monarchies and aristocracies, those in government will act in their self-interest to use their power to maximise their pleasure and minimise their pain (Mill 1992b: 8-10). As a consequence of the

utilitarian zero-sum view of happiness, the majority of the community will have their happiness reduced to the extent that members of the government increase their happiness.

Democracy is the only remaining form of government countenanced by Mill. By 'democracy', Mill means republican-style direct democracy in which the community governs itself. Democracy, in which the community performs the primary protective function of government (ie protecting one from another), seems also to be the perfect way in which to ensure that the community is protected from the government. Mill arrives at this position via an argument reminiscent of Rousseau's notion of the General Will and Plato's position on *akrasia* [acting contrary to what one considers best]:

The Community cannot have an interest opposite to its interest. To affirm this would be a contradiction in terms. The Community within itself, and with respect to itself, can have no sinister interest.¹³⁷ One Community may intend evil of another, never its own. ... The Community may act wrong from mistake. To suppose that it could from design, would be to suppose that human beings can wish their own misery (Mill 1992b: 8).

Mill views the community here as an organic whole. It will not act in any way differently from an individual, that is, it will seek to maximise its happiness. It cannot have a particular will, or 'sinister' interest, in relation to itself.¹³⁸ It can only act against its interest, by mistake, or out of ignorance.

Democracy overcomes the problems associated with governmental self-interest in monarchy and aristocracy. In a democracy, the community, which forms the government, will only ever act in its interest, that is, in a way that maximises its happiness. This can only be achieved by maximising the happiness of the

¹³⁷ By 'sinister interest' Mill means the Benthamite notion of self-interest or class-interest (Ball 1992: xxi).

¹³⁸ Unlike Rousseau, however, Mill regards the community interest as an aggregate of individual interests (Mill 1992b: 20). Rousseau, as we have seen, rejects this view, understanding the General Will to be derived not from individual or particular wills, but from the will of the community acting as if it were an individual in its own right.

component parts of the community, that is, the people. Therefore, Mill's argument runs, democracy ensures the greatest happiness for the greatest number in a community by protecting the individual from other individuals and by ensuring that the government acts only to maximise the happiness of all. To do otherwise would be to accept that governments can act outside of self-interest, which runs counter to the whole premise of Mill's utilitarianism.

So, then, should direct democracy be regarded as the best form of government? Following Mill's argument one would clearly think so; however, he immediately rejects such 'democracy' on the grounds that it could not be realised. A "community in mass", he argues, "is ill-adapted for the business of Government" (Mill 1992b: 8). A direct assembly would be too numerous in all but the smallest states, and too prone to being swayed by emotion. Governments, he says, require "calm and effectual deliberation" (Mill 1992b: 8). Besides, calling the whole community together would interrupt the economic rationale for communal existence, namely the conduct of labour and its product, property (Mill 1992b: 7).

Mill has, therefore, rejected all three forms of government as they will not protect the community's interest. Aristocracy and monarchy are prone to governmental 'sinister' interests, while democracy is unrealisable and not useable to protect the community's interest. Mill, therefore, seeks a way of rendering democracy realisable, in order to preserve its beneficial aspects. This he finds in that "grand discovery of modern times, the system of representation" (Mill 1992b: 22). Representation allows the community to place a check on government, to ensure that it acts in the community's interest, and not out of self interest:

For as there is no individual, or combination of individuals, except the community itself, who do not have an interest in bad Government, if entrusted with its powers; and as the community itself is incapable of exercising those powers, and must entrust them to some individual or combination of individuals, the conclusion is obvious: The Community itself must check those individuals, else

they will follow their interest, and produce bad Government (Mill 1992b: 21).

Mill, like most liberals, subscribes to a view of government that shields it at least in part from the democratic process. The 'separation of powers' argument is usually presented as a tripartite balancing act between the representative body, the legislative; the 'doing' body, the executive; and the overseeing body, the judiciary.¹³⁹ Government, it is said, ought to be restrained by this structure, which is usually formalised in constitutional arrangements. The monopolistic nature of government and its potential for tyranny, is undone by separating power among potentially competing arms of government. For Mill, however, such a structure would inevitably fail as there would be nothing to prevent two or more of the arms colluding with one another for private gain: "If there were three powers, how is it possible to prevent two of them combining to swallow up the third?" (Mill 1992b: 19).

Rather than a tripartite separation of power, Mill tends toward a bipartite structure in which the judiciary acts as an enforcer of the executive's will. The judiciary, in his essay "Jurisprudence", for example, appears to be little more than a form of the executive (Mill 1992c). Thus Mill's bipartite separation of powers, has on one arm the active part of government, the executive (plus the judiciary), which acts to protect individuals from one another. The other arm is the checking part of government, the democratic representative body, which acts as a check on all parts of government. Democracy only extends to the representative institution. Executive functions, and indeed those of the judiciary, are specialist occupations not suited to such a process, but which must be constrained by it (Mill 1992b: 35-36).

¹³⁹ See Montesquieu (1952), esp pp: 69-75.

Mill finds in representation an expedient means of securing a check on government. The problem then resolves itself into how to ensure that such a check occurs in practice. The key, he argues, is to ensure, firstly, that the representative body has the power to check government and, secondly, to ensure that the interests of this body coincide with the interests of the community. The first issue Mill assumes to be a question of the division of power between the representative body and the executive. The former must have “power sufficient to overcome” the power of the executive (Mill 1992b: 23). The representative body must be able to equal “all that power, wherever lodged, which they, in whose hands it is lodged, have an interest in misusing” (Mill 1992b: 22).¹⁴⁰ Thus the representative body must be able to control the acts of the government and its members.

Assuming that the representative body is granted sufficient power to control the acts of government, how will the acts of the representatives comprising the representative body be controlled? This is Mill’s second and most major concern. Representatives need to be controlled because “they, like any other men, will use their power, not for the advantage of the community, but for their own advantage, if they can” (Mill 1992b: 23). This is because the representative occupies a dual role in both “his capacity of Representative, in which he has the exercise of power over others, and in his capacity of Member of the Community, in which others have the exercise of power over him” (Mill 1992b: 23). Preventing the use of power by representatives toward sinister ends, cannot diminish the power they hold, otherwise the executive may not be controlled, and this would defeat the

¹⁴⁰ Mill’s understanding of ‘power’ is unequivocally utilitarian and teleological: it is “a means to an end. The end is everything, without exception, which the human being calls pleasure and the removal of pain” (Mill 1992b: 12). Further, power is an exercise in domination, most typically over other people: “Power ... means security for the conformity between the will of one man and the acts of other men” (Mill 1992b: 12).

purpose of representation. Instead, Mill argues, the only solution is to ensure that representatives are not secure in their role.

Representatives should constantly be thinking in terms of their interests as a member of the community. To achieve this requires frequent elections in which the representative risks being returned to the status of merely a member of the community, and the subject of government action. Representatives will, therefore, be motivated to act in the interests of the community (to govern well) because, they too, may have to suffer the consequences of bad government (Mill 1992b: 23-26).¹⁴¹ Mill does not specify a timeframe for the frequency of elections, but he again turns to practicality as a useful measure - governments need sufficient time to carry out programs, and elections can be something of a burden if too frequent (Mill 1992b: 24-25).

Mill's account of the virtues of representative democracy is a good example of the so-called 'protective' school of liberal democratic theory that we identified earlier in this chapter. Democracy is a system for ensuring that the necessary evil, government, does not abuse its power. Government is necessary for securing the conditions in which essentially competitive and selfish individuals can 'get along'. Government's strength lies in its monopoly of civil power. This monopoly is how government succeeds in its task. It is also a major cause of concern, as power, seen by liberals as domination, is something to be feared. Government is, therefore, an essential solution to the problem of human nature, but also is itself a problem to be dealt with. Democracy, then, for Mill, as for other protective liberal democrats, is a means by which government is restrained.

¹⁴¹ Mill regards frequent elections as the only effective way of motivating a representative to act in the interests of the community. The other means contemplated by Mill is restitution for bad acts by representatives. This he rejects as "haphazard" (Mill 1992b: 25), and although he does not say this, it would be hard to imagine that a sinister government would act to punish itself.

Direct democracy is rejected on the grounds of unrealisability, leaving representation as a substitute.

We have seen that Mill defines and justifies liberal democracy in classic liberal terms. His definition of democracy ends up being transformed by the need for such a notion to be realisable. Mill goes on to provide a particularly idiosyncratic theory of the realisation of liberal democracy. The functional Millian notion of democracy and its purpose extends to considerations on the electorate and the qualifications required of an elector. Given the self-consciously radical nature of “Government”, Mill’s pronouncements on the appropriate restrictions to be placed on the franchise come as something of a surprise. Having espoused the view that the representative body should act in line with the interests of the community, it is somewhat strange that Mill immediately turns to arguing for what appears to be a very restricted franchise, rather than a broad or universal franchise.¹⁴² A simple utilitarian argument would be to argue that the best way to get a reflection of the interests of the community would be to aggregate their votes. Mill, however, does not even appear to consider this as a real possibility, instead moving immediately to discussing the means by which to restrict the franchise, but still produce the same result, *as if the whole community were voting*.

The crux of Mill’s argument in relation to the franchise turns on an apparently unwittingly anti-utilitarian element that flows through from his notion of representation. Mill’s argument in relation to the franchise has been accused of being ‘virtual’ representation (Stimson and Milgate 1993: 905).¹⁴³ This is despite

¹⁴² It must be said, however, that at the time of writing (1820), Mill’s proposals would, if accepted, have quadrupled Britain’s electorate from 0.5 million to 2.1 million electors (Stimson and Milgate 1993: 906). By comparison, the first great electoral reform in 1832 only added an extra 0.3 million person to the electoral roll.

¹⁴³ On the notion of representation, see Appendix C. My conclusion is that Mill’s arguments are neither purely virtualist, nor utilitarian.

his having been very critical of the Whig proponents of this view, especially Edmund Burke, Sir James Mackintosh and Macaulay (Ball 1992: xx). Mill's virtualism arises when he argues that what is being represented in the representative assembly is interests, not necessarily persons. By 'interests' Mill means neither whims, or even rational claims. Rather he describes 'interests' in the following terms:

It is indisputable that the acts of men follow their will; that their will follows their desires; and that their desires are generated by their apprehensions of good and evil; in other words, by their interests (Mill 1992b: 36).

The interests being represented are the 'apprehensions of good or evil' of the community. Mill goes through a series of arguments to determine if it is necessary to have the whole community vote in which clearly "the interest of the community and the choosing body [the electorate] would be the same" (Mill 1992b: 27), or whether there is "any portion of the community, if elected into the choosing body [whose interests] would remain the same" as the whole community (Mill 1992b: 27).

Mill firstly excludes women and children from the franchise, on the grounds that their interests are the same as those of their husbands or fathers (Mill 1992b: 27). This is a point on which the Whig Macaulay mercilessly attacked the radical Mill (Macaulay 1992: 291-292),¹⁴⁴ and has been the subject of much subsequent criticism.¹⁴⁵ Mill further argues that the minimum voting age could be set at forty "without any inconvenience" (Mill 1992b: 28). Mill's precise reasons for picking this age are unclear, but he does argue that "scarcely any laws could be made for the benefit of all the men of forty which would not be for the benefit of all the rest of the community" (Mill 1992b: 28). In other words, Mill is

¹⁴⁴ On 'radicalism' see Crimmins (1994).

¹⁴⁵ See further: Thomas (1979: 128) and Claeys (1989: 173).

concerned that the representatives selected by the electorate do not pass class or other sinister legislation. It is for this reason that he rejects anything other than a very broad property qualification for the franchise, and also rejects outright a franchise based on a person's employment or profession. Both of these would lead in his view to a representative body elected by, and therefore reflecting, persons with a sinister interest (Mill 1992b: 27-35).

Why would a man over the age of forty not have sinister interests to pursue? Mill suggests that this is because "the great majority of old men have sons, whose interests they regard as an essential part of their own. This is a law of human nature" (Mill 1992b: 28). So whereas younger men might elect sinister representatives, older men, by virtue of their likely parenthood, will vote in a way that reflects the interests of their sons, wives, mothers, sisters and daughters. Mill's argument for such an exclusive franchise is clearly problematic, and indeed his son argued strongly against his father's exclusions. What is less well explored are Mill's reasons for such an exclusive franchise, the answers for which lie in both his essay "Government", his work on "Education"¹⁴⁶ and his defence of his thesis in his "Fragment on Mackintosh"¹⁴⁷.

There are two issues that need exploring here. Firstly, what is the difference between representing interests and representing persons? Secondly, what motivates Mill toward viewing interests rather than persons as the logical object of representation? In relation to the first issue, you will recall that Mill views his representative body as representing *all* the interests of the community. Mill appears to be concerned that identical interests are not represented by more than one vote. An interest, therefore, could cover one or a number of persons.

¹⁴⁶ Mill (1992a) - first published in 1819.

¹⁴⁷ Mill (1992d) - first published in 1835.

Interests, it appears, should have equal voting weight. If not, there would be the risk that the representative body may represent the largest interests in the community, but not all of the interests of the community. Stimson and Milgate (1993) point out that this appears to contradict the utilitarian argument for aggregate utility. The “utilitarian calculus” gives equal weight to persons rather than interests (Stimson and Milgate 1993: 905).

Mill, it appears, cannot see the point of ‘cluttering up’ the electoral roll with persons, such as women, who share the same interests as someone else. All this does is make the electoral college at least twice as large as it needs to be to yield the same result. But, if we exclude all women, we have to be sure that their interests really are represented, hence Mill excluded as well young men, who he feels will only think of themselves, and not their family, when they vote. This is, of course, an incoherent argument on a number of grounds, not the least of which being that there is nothing to say that some (older) men will not have the same interest as one another. Shouldn’t they, too, be excluded? Mill offers no argument on this front, and it is his son who resolves the problem, by proposing universal adult suffrage, and incorporating proportional representation to ensure the representation of all interests in an assembly.

What remains unexplained is why Mill shifts from the familiar utilitarian calculus of aggregate individual happiness toward the virtual representation of interests. One could argue that he is motivated by the old liberal fear, the tyranny of the majority. In a simple majoritarian electoral system, such as that in operation in Britain, the interests (votes) of the numerous class would tend to overwhelm minority interests (votes) in terms of who gets elected. This is certainly a great fear expressed by JS Mill, and the principal reason why he adds plural voting to his favoured system of proportional representation (see below). There is, however, in James Mill’s arguments, expressed none of the liberal fear of the majority, indeed he has only just stopped telling us that democratic

governments should reflect and act to maximise the happiness of the whole community. This could, of course, be at the expense of the unhappiness of a few. Further, he goes on to rail against those liberals and conservatives who fear the ‘mob’, that they should not reject democracy because of it, but rather they should take it as an argument in favour of greater democracy (Mill 1991b: 41-42). Instead of the liberal fear of the majority, Mill is, I believe, motivated by something quite different. We find evidence for this in his arguments in relation to *akrasia* and the ‘middle rank’.

After considering methods of selecting an electorate whose interests would be the same as the whole of the community, Mill addresses the one remaining situation in which such an electorate could still act against the interests of the community. This could arise in the form of *accidental* sinister behaviour. Mill was a great devotee of Plato (Ball 1992: xiii), and like the ancient Athenian, the nineteenth century Scot found the notion of *akrasia* challenging. As we saw in Chapter Two, *akrasia*, that is, acting contrary to what one considers best, was rejected as practically impossible by Plato. The only possibility Plato saw for *akratic* action was in accidental actions, for one never would willingly deliberately act against one’s reason. The source of such involuntary *akrasia* is, Plato argued, ignorance. The solution to ignorance is knowledge.

Mill follows precisely the Platonic argument in relation to *akratic* action. He acknowledges that people “do not act according to their interests, but very often in opposition to them” (Mill 1992b: 39-40). This happens, however, only by mistake (Mill 1992b: 37). But the:

evils which arise from mistake are not incurable; for, if the parties who act contrary to their interest had proper knowledge of that interest, they would act well. What is necessary, then, is knowledge. Knowledge, on the part of those whose interests are the same as those of the community, would be an adequate remedy. But knowledge is a thing which is capable of being increased: and the more it is increased the more the evils on this side of the case would be reduced (Mill 1992b: 37-38).

This is pure Plato, with a characteristically Millian pedagogic twist. Plato saw education and knowledge properly belonging to the Philosopher-rulers, who would direct the obedient Guardians and the masses. Mill argues that “it is no longer deniable that a high degree of knowledge is capable of being conveyed to such a portion of the community, as would have interests the same with those of the community. This [is] ... the only resource for good government” (Mill 1992b: 38).

James Mill was deeply interested in education, both in theory and practice. In his own life he had raised himself from a family of shoemakers to a prominent intellectual, through educational self-development. He wrote extensively on the theory of education¹⁴⁸ and subjected his children to a rigorous experimental education based on this theory. John Stuart Mill carried on the interest in pedagogy, tying education into his theory of democratic government (see below). In his essay “Education”, James Mill describes the outcome of education in utilitarian terms, namely to “render the individual ... an instrument of happiness, first to himself, and next to other beings” (Mill 1992a: 139), but describes the education’s output, its mental ‘products’, in terms redolent of Ancient Greek philosophical imagery.

Mill argues that there are two mental products for each of the outcomes of education. For the happiness of others, education must develop Justice and Generosity in the individual. The former consists in abstaining from doing others harm, the latter in doing them a positive good (Mill 1992a: 155-156). For personal happiness, education must provide the individual with, firstly, intelligence, which Mill describes as knowledge guided by the power to choose, “sagacity” (Mill 1992a: 154) and, secondly, ‘temperance’. By the latter he acknowledges that he is referring not to modern moral notions of abstinence and

¹⁴⁸ See Mill (1992a).

the “infliction of voluntary pain ... with a view to please the God” and to secure happiness in a future life (Mill 1992a: 155). Mill’s view of temperance is best described as Christian-Aristotelian. It is:

a perfect command ... over a man’s appetites and desires; the power of restraining them whenever they lead in a hurtful direction; that possession of himself which insures his judgement against the illusions of the passions, and enables him to pursue constantly what he deliberately approves (Mill 1992a: 155).

Unlike the Ancients who located temperance in the control of one’s actions, Mill sites temperance with the control of the passions, but his motivation remain Greek: to avoid *akrasia*.

The electorate, however large or small, must be educated if it is to avoid *akrasia*. To that end, Mill pins his hopes not on the aristocracy, or even the middle or working classes, but on the “middle rank”. By ‘rank’, Ball notes, Mill did not mean ‘class’ as is understood in later political theory, that is “purely descriptive, fairly distinct, and normatively neutral socio-economic entities” (Ball 1992: xxi). Rank, for Mill, recalls his “Scottish education. ... [The term] meant to pick out people of particular intellectual merit and to mark gradations of moral and civic influence” (Ball 1992: xxi). This middle rank, according to Mill, forms a large part of the British population, and he says, they are “universally described as both the most wise and the most virtuous part of the community” (Mill 1992b: 41). The middle rank do not have the sinister interests that a class must possess. Instead what unites them is education, public-spiritedness, and their willingness to lead the masses (Mill 1992b: 41).¹⁴⁹ Thus, it is not surprising that Mill and his son believed that the educated classes should “to all intents and purposes, govern the rest” (Mill 1992b: 40), and that education was the only way to ensure that an elector would act in line with his knowledge.

¹⁴⁹ See also Ball (1992: xxi). Compare Macaulay (1992: 298).

So why did the older Mill exclude women and young men from the franchise? In forming his notion of virtual representation of interests, Mill has shifted out of utilitarian mode. He is thinking in a Greek and especially Platonic manner instead. We know this, because in his recently uncovered reply to Macaulay's critique of "Government", Mill quotes at length, and in the original Greek, large tracts of Plato's *Republic* in defending his notion of the representation of interests (see Mill 1992d: 310-312). As Mill himself acknowledges, there are good utilitarian reasons for a wide franchise. But there are also good Platonic reasons for arguing that the franchise ought to be restricted to those who truly *know their interest*. In an imaginary Platonic realm of the representation of these interests, what matters is not their weight, but their merit *vis à vis* the interests of the whole community.

So it is that what began as an essay on the dual protective function of government in securing the happiness of the community and the importance of democracy to fulfilling that function, ends with a discussion of the value of the educated 'middle rank'. This rank can by example, and its mere presence, restrain the "irregularities of the mob" (Mill 1992b: 41), the *hoi polloi* to use the Greek phrase. To a certain extent, Mill's tale of democratic government and its realisation begins as a modern radical proposal and ends with an ancient overlay. Macaulay recognised this, and roundly criticised Mill for it, while his son, John Stuart, tried to preserve much of his father's sentiments in his work on representative democracy.

John Stuart Mill: developmental democrat

James Mill named his first born son after his Scottish patron, Sir John Stuart of Fettercairn. The father imposed on his son, and indeed all his children, a rigorous and novel home-based education commencing with Classical Greek at the age of three. The severe education led ultimately to John Stuart's mental breakdown at

the age of 20-21, based on his fear that he was a “manufactured man” (Ball 1992: xvi-xvii, xxx and Gray 1991: xxxiv).

Whether ‘manufactured’ or not, JS Mill went on to become the dominant figure in nineteenth century liberal thought. His legacy has been an enduring one. Depending on who you read, JS Mill is viewed either as presenting an eclectic, inconsistent and ultimately impotent attempt to revise and revive the spirit of liberalism in an age of increasing mechanisation and socialist criticism,¹⁵⁰ or, more recently, as a “methodological and programmatic thinker, whose lifelong project was the reconstruction of classical utilitarianism in a form that could withstand the criticisms of Macaulay and the insights of Coleridge” (Gray 1991: vii).¹⁵¹

Importantly, for this thesis, JS Mill followed his father’s interest in democracy and government, but his enquiries led him to different conclusions. JS Mill’s democratic theory is the prototype most often quoted in the historiographical literature of the second major strand in liberal democratic theory, the so-called ‘developmental’ theory of liberal democracy. This strand of theory, far from viewing government as a necessary evil to be contained by the democratic process, sees it instead as a potential positive agent in developing the democratic capacities of the citizenry. While this difference is important, and will be explored shortly, what will also emerge are some important commonalities that bear on how the issue of realisation is addressed in liberal democratic theory.

¹⁵⁰See: Arblaster (1984: 281-282); Arneson (1982: 43); Gray (1988: 119 & 131-132); Gray (1991: vii); and Hughes (1972). Himmelfarb provoked a storm of debate when she proposed in 1974 that there were two JS Mills - the libertarian in “On Liberty”, and the authoritarian in “Utilitarianism” and “Representative Government” (1974). Compare Rees (1977 and 1985).

¹⁵¹ See also: Ten (1988) and Riley (1988).

JS Mill says he published his major work of liberal democratic theory “Considerations on Representative Government”¹⁵² in 1861, in order to bring together the ideas which he had “been working up during the greater part of my life” (JS Mill 1991a: 204). The work’s novelty, he says, lies in its attempt to integrate comprehensively his, and like-minded authors’ views on the subject. One can read JS Mill’s work as a monument *in style as much in substance* to Macaulay’s devastating critique of his father’s work on representative democracy. Instead of his father’s spartan ‘plain language’ style, which Macaulay describes as affecting a “quakerly plainness, or rather a cynical negligence and impurity” (Macaulay 1992: 272), JS Mill writes an elegant, if rather wordy, document. Further, JS Mill does not follow his father’s *a priori* deductive method of reasoning. Macaulay had dismissed this technique as ‘synthetic’ and as akin to the casuistry of the Middle Ages: “He [James Mill] is an Aristotelian of the fifteenth century, born out of season” (Macaulay 1992: 273).¹⁵³ Despite his oblique reply to Macaulay in his “Fragment on Mackintosh” (Mill 1992d), James Mill never responded well to this critique, a fact that distressed his son, who wrote in his autobiography that “I was not at all satisfied with the mode in which my

¹⁵² Hereafter: “Representative Government”. Thompson’s work (1976) is perhaps the best commentary on this text.

¹⁵³ The problem with James Mill’s method, according to Macaulay, is that the facts get in the way. Mill begins with a theory of human nature and deduces from this a theory of government. The alternative methodology proposed by Macaulay is Baconian inductive reasoning, that is, the observation-based hypothesis-testing methodology that became known as ‘scientific method’: “the only way to arrive at truth is by induction. *Experience* can never be divided, or even appear to be divided, except with reference to some hypothesis. When we say that one fact is inconsistent with another fact, we mean only that it is inconsistent with *the theory* which we have founded on that other fact. ... [T]he unavoidable conclusion is that our theory is false; and, in order to correct it, we must reason back from an enlarged collection of facts to principles” (Macaulay 1992: 274 - original emphasis).

Chalmer’s little book on the philosophy of scientific reasoning makes a couple of interesting points on this issue. Firstly, inductivism, while superficially appealing, is as fundamentally flawed as Mill’s *a priori* methodology: its principle that “scientific knowledge is derived from observation statements by induction” is not of itself justifiable or defensible in its own terms (Chalmers 1982: 13-37). Indeed, despite Macaulay’s critique of Mill’s deductive method, the predictive extension of inductive theory is the same, in that observation *leads* to hypothesis forming, from which other predictive principles may be deduced, in a Millian manner (Chalmers 1982: 5-7). Mill and Macaulay are not so far apart: the difference is in their starting point only. The former begins with ‘theory’, the latter with ‘observation’, but neither is aware that each is as uncertain as the other.

father met the criticisms of Macaulay. He did not, as I thought he ought to have done, justify himself by saying, ‘I was not writing a scientific treatise on politics. I was writing an article on parliamentary reform’” (Ball 1992: xxv). JS Mill’s work on representative government with its masses of examples, digression and discussion, appears driven in part by this disappointment.

JS Mill begins his treatise on representative government by knocking down two straw figures. These figures, behind which we can see his father and Bentham on the one hand, and Coleridge and the German idealists on the other, disagree about the nature of government. The former, according to JS Mill, view government as a purely human artifice, a technical exercise in political calculus and intellectual enquiry (JS Mill 1991a: 205). The latter, he says, see government as a national organic growth “from the nature and life of that people: a product of their habits, instincts, and unconscious wants and desire, scarcely at all of their deliberative purposes” (JS Mill 1991a: 206). Both these propositions are, he says, “absurd” (JS Mill 1991a: 206). Governments, JS Mill concedes, “owe their origin and existence to human will. Men did not wake on a summer morning and find them sprung up. Neither do they resemble trees, which once planted, ‘are ay growing’ while men ‘are sleeping’” (JS Mill 1991a: 207).¹⁵⁴

JS Mill argues that governments are also not merely technical machinery, but the products of people, their activities, interests and capacities. To that end, he argues that government requires three conditions in order to be realised: firstly, that the people must accept the form that it takes, or at least not reject it (JS Mill never doubts the need for government itself); secondly, they must be willing to maintain the government; and thirdly, “they must be willing and able to do what it requires of them to enable it to fulfil its purposes” (JS Mill 1991a: 207-208). The principal purpose of government, he says, is to foster the “well-being” of the

¹⁵⁴ Mill is quoting Sir Walter Scott, *The Heart of the Midlothian*.

people (JS Mill 1991a: 227). These conditions are at the heart of Millian liberal democratic theory. Government rests not only on the consent of the people, but also on the actions of the people. By the latter, JS Mill is quick to point out that he means both the performance of acts to uphold government, and the performance of non-acts, of self-restraint, to maintain the conditions for government (JS Mill 1991a: 208).

Despite rejecting the notion of government *per se* as organic, JS Mill does subscribe to a quasi organic theory in which the ‘level of development’ and ‘national character’ influence the form that government takes.¹⁵⁵ Unlike the more inevitablist and static nature of organic theories, however, JS Mill argues that such conditions influence the nature of government, but do not determine it. Further, he argues that such influences are dynamic, with national tastes capable of changing over time (JS Mill 1991a: 211-212). All of this means that JS Mill cannot say that one form of government is best, in all cases of national development. Rather, he puts forward a relativist argument, that the best form of government will depend on the “qualities of the human beings comprising the society over which government is exercised” (JS Mill 1991a: 225).

Unlike his father, JS Mill views government not wholly in a protective manner. Government is not to be feared, but is to be seen as a tool for the common good. The importance with which he views this is illustrated in its incorporation into his two criteria for judging the “goodness of a government”:

[firstly] the degree in which it tends to increase the sum of good qualities in the governed, collectively and individually; ... [and secondly] the quality of the machinery itself; that is, the degree in which it is adapted to take advantage of the good qualities which may at any time exist, and make them instrumental to the right purposes (JS Mill 1991a: 227).

¹⁵⁵ JS Mill consistently associates ‘higher’ development with Europe and the West, reserving particular condemnation for the Middle East and Asia (1991a: 231). Such an argument is consistent with his observations in *On Liberty* (1991b- see also Gray 1991: xxi).

You will note the utilitarian tone of the first criterion, but also the assumption that it is government itself that plays the active role in ‘increasing the good qualities’ of the community. Good government is not merely a *protector* of its citizens, either passive or active, it is a *developer* of them. This is why JS Mill is regarded as the founder of the ‘developmental’ strand of liberal democratic theory. You will also note the highly mechanistic language of the second criterion. This is an important characteristic of JS Mill’s notion of government, one which extends to his notion of democratic governments.

What are the ‘good qualities’ that government is to promote in the community? These are, according to JS Mill, the “advancement in intellect, in virtue and in practical activity and efficiency” of the people (JS Mill 1991a: 229). In line with his father’s pedagogic approach to progress, such ‘advancement’ is presented as ‘education’. It is government’s role as an “agency of national education” and not its mechanical aspect in “conducting the collective affairs of the community in the state of education in which they already are” (JS Mill 1991a: 230) that JS Mill suggests is the principal cause of variations in the governmental form. The latter is mostly a technical exercise, capable of being performed in most forms of government, but performed “best under a free constitution” (JS Mill 1991a: 230).

How, if governmental type is relative to the qualities of its society, can JS Mill then go directly on to say that the “ideally best form of government is representative government” (JS Mill 1991a: 238), or liberal democracy, as we now know it? JS Mill agrees that:

the ideally best form of government ... does not mean one which is practicable or eligible in all states of civilization, but the one which, in the circumstances in which it is practicable and eligible, is attended with the greatest amount of beneficial consequences, immediate and prospective (JS Mill 1991a: 244).

As we have seen, he subscribes to an organic linking of governmental type to the social/educational ‘progress’ in a community. This would seem to imply that the most appropriate form of government is a dependent concept. The only way one

could put forward a coherent argument for an 'ideal' type of government is to assume that there is an ideal form of social/educational development, which will in turn determine the ideal form of government. This is the approach taken by JS Mill, who assumes that Europe, and in particular England, has reached this stage.

The ideal form of government is a "completely popular form of government" (JS Mill 1991a: 244). Popular government, or democracy, is the best form of government for two, selfish, reasons. Firstly, like his father, JS Mill argues that popular government is best in securing protection for the community, in that "human beings are only secure from evil at the hands of others in proportion as they have the power of being, and are, *self-protecting*" (JS Mill 1991a: 245 - original emphasis). Secondly, democracy promotes self-reliance: "they [human beings] only achieve a high degree of success in their struggle with Nature, in proportion as they are *self-dependent*, relying on what they themselves can do, either separately or in concert, rather than on what others do for them" (JS Mill 1991a: 245 - original emphasis).

The national 'temperament' that would support a representative government is one that is typified by an "active self-helping character" (JS Mill 1991a: 252).¹⁵⁶ He suggests that representative government requires a society to have learned the "lessons of civilization", including obedience to a "common superior", and an overcoming of the usual "inveterate spirit of locality" (JS Mill 1991a: 260-262). In contrast with his father, he argues that "the desire to exercise power over others ... [and the] disinclination to have power exercised over themselves" renders a people "absolutely unfit for representative government" (JS Mill 1991a: 266). These twin motivations were central to the older Mill's utilitarian theory of

¹⁵⁶ The idea that an active 'self-help' character is vital to the realisation of democracy was to become a touchstone of American democratic theory. See for example: Dahl (1956), Almond and Verba (1965), Tickner (1986).

government. As a consequence, and not surprisingly, given JS Mill's anglophilia, all of these qualities are to be found in:

the political feelings of Englishmen; their unhesitating readiness to let themselves be governed by the higher classes, coupled with so little personal subservience to them, that no people are so fond of resisting authority when it oversteps certain prescribed limits, or so determined to make their rulers always remember that they will only be governed in the way they themselves like best (JS Mill 1991a: 267-268).

JS Mill closes his discussion of the merits of democracy by simply dismissing direct democracy in the concluding sentence of the section. The grounds he puts forward for doing this are purely practical:

But since all cannot, in a community exceeding a single small town, participate personally in any but some very minor portions of public business, it follows that the ideal type of a perfect government must be representative (JS Mill 1991a: 256).

Direct democracy, it would appear, under the logic of JS Mill's argument, is preferable to representative democracy, if it were realisable, but unfortunately it is not. It is clear, therefore, that JS Mill, like his father, regards democracy as the best form of government, and that representative democracy is its only realisable form.

Like his father, JS Mill views the product of the democratic process, an elected representative assembly, as being "radically unfit" for governing (JS Mill 1991a: 282). Governing is a technical exercise best left for experts. Instead, the role of the representative assembly is to "watch and control the government" (JS Mill 1991a: 282). They should not *do* anything, rather their role is to talk about the "great public interests of the country" (JS Mill 1991a: 283). The government on the other hand, as the doing body, requires the power to carry out its plans and also needs to generate the conditions for maintaining the 'character' required to sustain democracy (JS Mill 1991a: 286). These character conditions, both moral and intellectual, flow through into representatives elected to the assembly (JS Mill 1991a: 292).

We come now to the most controversial element of JS Mill's theory of representative democracy, the franchise. As with his father and Bentham, JS Mill is concerned with the possibility of 'sinister' government, and most especially the products of a 'sinister' representative assembly (JS Mill 1991a: 292), which he describes in terms of 'class' legislation:¹⁵⁷

One of the greatest dangers, therefore, of democracy ... lies in the sinister interest of the holders of power: it is the danger of class legislation; of government intended for ... the immediate benefit of the dominant class, to the detriment of the whole (JS Mill 1991a: 299).

JS Mill here steps close to his father's double protective stance on government: government could be something to be feared, if it were to act in a class interest. Once facing this issue, however, the younger Mill follows the logic that his father probably ought also to have done. Rather than restrict access to the franchise, JS Mill argues for a radical expansion of it to include all adult men and women, with no property requirement.¹⁵⁸ Against the virtual representation argument, he argues that "all human beings [regardless of sex] have the same interest in good government; the welfare of all is alike affected by it, and they have equal need of a voice in it to secure their share of the benefits" (JS Mill 1991a: 341). If women were to vote as dependents of their fathers or husbands, it will do no harm, and if "they think for themselves, great good will be done" (JS Mill 1991a: 343). Indeed, he says, the enfranchisement of women may well improve the "quality" of the overall vote by increasing the scope for political discussion (JS Mill 1991a: 343-344).¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁷ JS Mill uses 'class' in the conventional sense of the word (JS Mill 1991a: 300).

¹⁵⁸ JS Mill (1991a: 335). He would still exclude the illiterate, the innumerate, those that do not pay taxes, bankrupts, and those on welfare (JS Mill 1991a: 330-333).

¹⁵⁹ JS Mill was quite serious about the extension of the franchise. During his brief parliamentary career (1866-67), he supported every move to extend the franchise. He supported the successful 1867 Representation of the People Bill (the "Reform Bill") which massively increased the electorate, and introduced an amendment to that Bill that would have enfranchised women, which was defeated (See Zimmer (1976)). All adult women were not enfranchised in Britain until 1928.

In addition to his radical views on the franchise, JS Mill championed Hare's system of proportional representation, to ensure that minorities are proportionally represented on the grounds "of equal justice", and that "no elector would, as at present, be nominally represented by someone whom he had not chosen" (JS Mill 1991a: 310).¹⁶⁰ But, while being radical in handing out the right to vote, and ways in which electors could cast their vote, and have it counted, JS Mill runs up against that old liberal bogey, the tyranny of the majority.

Democracy, JS Mill argues, is commonly misunderstood to mean "the government of the whole people by a mere majority of the people, exclusively represented" (JS Mill 1991a: 302). This leads in practice to a "government of privilege" for the majority (JS Mill 1991a: 303). This notion of democracy JS Mill cannot countenance. Rather, he views "pure democracy ... [as] government of the whole people by the whole people, equally represented (JS Mill 1991a: 302). Thus, it makes sense that he should support proportional representation in which the majority may well rule, but the minority will be heard and may be able to influence the majority.

In a democracy with an extended franchise, the majority will come from the labouring classes (JS Mill 1991a: 305 & 333). JS Mill is concerned that such a system may not only lead to the tyranny of the majority, but will lead to "collective mediocrity ... [as] the principal power [is placed] in the hands of classes more and more below the highest level of instruction in the community" (JS Mill 1991a: 313). As noted before, JS Mill shares with his father the view that the less well educated should look to the better educated, the "instructed minority" (JS Mill 1991a: 313 and 1859: 470-471) as JS Mill puts it, for guidance.

¹⁶⁰ See further JS Mill (1991a: 308-325).

The tyranny of the majority could be to some extent ameliorated if proportional representation were introduced. But even if this were so, the fact that the labouring classes make up such a large majority in the population will mean a broadly based franchise could lead to governments that pander to the (uninstructed) opinion of this class. This is a common problem facing liberal and republican theorists. Republicans, as we have found, turn to a restricted franchise in some cases, and most importantly, to virtue and moral opprobrium to ensure that the public's opinion is in line with the General Will. They seek to level out class interest in favour of the general interest. James Mill, as we have just seen, also opted for a restricted franchise, and out of hope more than anything else, thought that the remaining electors would naturally turn to the 'middle rank' for guidance and leadership.

JS Mill rejects as too risky the idea that the majority class might of its own accord exercise "good sense, moderation, and forbearance" (JS Mill 1991a: 326). The majority *might* restrain themselves, but *will* they? If the system depends on this virtue-like outcome, but we cannot guarantee it, what can we do? The answer to realising liberal democracy, says JS Mill, lies in institutional design. Political structures will ensure outcomes similar to those that we would expect to arise from republican virtue. Democracy must be:

so organised that no class, not even the most numerous, shall be able to reduce all but itself to political insignificance, and direct the course of legislation and administration by its exclusive class interest. The problem is, to find the means of preventing this abuse, without sacrificing the characteristic advantages of popular government (JS Mill 1991a: 326-327- my emphasis).

JS Mill proposes a plural voting system, to achieve an organisational design that replicates the effects of republican virtue, that is, to restrain the actions of the electors so that they are in line with the common good. Virtually everyone should have the equal right to vote, but the worth of that vote should reflect a voter's "mental ability" and knowledge (JS Mill 1991a: 336-337). A person's occupation could be an indicator of the weight accorded to his/her vote. The rule

JS Mill applies is that the higher the level of ‘instruction’ required of an elector’s occupation, the weightier his or her vote should be. There should also be room for a person to sit a test to prove his or her voting worth (JS Mill 1991a: 336-337). By weighting the system in favour of educated persons, JS Mill has, of course, assumed that such people are less likely to vote in a sinister manner, an assumption he no doubt inherited from his father.

Clearly JS Mill’s proposal for a plural voting system is problematic. JS Mill himself acknowledges this (JS Mill 1991a: 338), and it must be said that he was willing to sacrifice the plural vote if it meant that universal suffrage was introduced. In other words, he was prepared to accept the ‘risks’ associated with majority rule as a compromise, particularly as he believed that political participation itself was educative. In time, the uneducated would have to learn about the political system in order to exercise their right to participate in it (JS Mill 1991a: 328). Self-development may thus be a natural product of democratic participation.¹⁶¹ Thus, while JS Mill believes that government should be done by the wisest (1859: 471), his pedagogic bent leads him to favour popular government over aristocratic government. Wisdom can be taught; and *nothing* is more important than a system of universal education (JS Mill 1991a: 330).

We could spend a lot more time examining JS Mill’s theory of representative democracy in greater detail. Certainly, there is plenty more in “Representative Government” than the aspects covered here. In keeping with his intention to present a complete theory of government, JS Mill goes on to discuss: two-stage elections, secret versus public ballots, bicameralism versus unicameralism, local government, federal systems and the government of colonies. However, the above outline is sufficient for the purposes of this thesis. It shows clearly why JS Mill is regarded as a principal founder of the ‘developmental’ school of liberal

¹⁶¹ See Eisenach (1989).

democratic thought. His democratic theory is quite different in some respects from the 'protective' school of democratic theory. Government exists for the benefit of all. Government can, and ought to, do things to ensure these benefits. This is why JS Mill is often cited as providing a prototype for an argument in favour of the modern welfare state, whose level of intervention protective democrats find difficult to accept.¹⁶²

Democratisation: a liberal theory of realising democracy?

Our detailed examination of the works of the two Mills has shown how important the issue of realisation was important to these early liberal democrats, and how they proposed to deal with it. As we saw earlier, however, the issue of realisation is hardly mentioned in the historiographical literature's account of liberal democratic theory. It was suggested that this neglect reflects the translation of the relative indifference among postwar democratic theorists to the issue of realisation into the historians' approach to the history of liberal democratic theory as a whole.

There is one strand of postwar liberal democratic theory, however, that one would expect to have a concern for theorising the realisation of liberal democracy. This is the literature on 'democratisation'.¹⁶³ My purpose here is not to discuss this literature in detail, as this would be a chapter in itself. Rather, the purpose is briefly to show two things: firstly, that there are good reasons for including this literature under the umbrella of 'liberal democratic theory'; and, secondly, and

¹⁶² See Kurer (1989a) and (1989b).

¹⁶³ A small recent sample of this growing literature would be: O'Donnell et al (1986), Ethier (1990), Schmitz and Gillies (1992), Haynes (1997), Hademius (1992), Pinkey (1994), Hippler (1995), Luckham and White (1996), Monshipouri (1995), Pourgerami (1991), Bauzon (1992), Slater et al (1993), Sakamoto (1994), Islam and Morrison (1996), Gills et al (1993), Diamond (1993), Abootalebi (1993), Di Palma (1990), Beetham (1993), Hall (1993), Lewis (1993), Whitehead (1993), Hawthorn (1993), Potter (1993), Bromley (1993), and many articles published in the *Journal of Democracy* (for example: Berger [1992], Kim [1992], Bhagwati [1992], Talavera [1992], and Morrison [1992]).

more importantly, to show that this literature continues the liberal approach to the realisation of democracy that we found in the two Mills. As such democratisation theory does not provide us with more on the issue of realisation than we have already covered in this chapter. It does, however, confirm that underneath the ostensible postwar indifference of realisation in liberal democratic theory, lies a theoretical model that has realisation inscribed in its very design and concepts.

Democratisation theory is quite fascinating, not only for what it says, but also for what it represents. It is a literature united by a number of assumptions, but equally divided by many others. It represents, in many ways, a curious blend of liberal democratic theory with development studies and a concern for political processes over distributional outcomes.

The term 'democratisation' reveals much about the assumptions of the authors that use it. These assumptions are in line with those underpinning liberal democracy. The term implies that democracy is a quality that can be possessed to a greater or lesser extent by a political system. This also implies that the meaning of this quality is clearly understood, and that its presence or absence in a political system can be identified and quantified. In addition, the term implies that political systems (including 'democracies') can change to become more 'democratic', or presumably less democratic, and that the former is a desirable outcome. Beetham sums the democratisation thesis up clearly:

[W]e should distinguish between the *concept* of democracy, which in my view is uncontestable, and whose point of reference lies at one end of a spectrum of possibilities; and different *theories* of democracy, which involve contestable claims about how much democracy is desirable or practicable, and how it might be realized in a sustainable institutional form. Of any existing set of political arrangements it is thus meaningful to ask how they might be made more democratic. And the concept of 'democratization' expresses both a clear direction of change along the spectrum, and a political movement or process of change, which can apply to any given system, not only change from authoritarian or dictatorial forms of rule (Beetham 1993: 55).

The most obvious uniting force in this literature is a preoccupation with the democratisation of non-Western polities, such as in Asia,¹⁶⁴ Latin America,¹⁶⁵ Africa,¹⁶⁶ the Middle East,¹⁶⁷ and Eastern Europe.¹⁶⁸ This geographical preoccupation is indicative of the liberal roots of the democratisation literature, for, while in theory the notion of democratisation is equally applicable to existing democracies, in practice it is applied to states that do not share the political traditions of liberal democracy. The preoccupation is also reflective of the Cold War roots of much of this literature, with its division between the democratic 'us' and the authoritarian/communist 'them'.¹⁶⁹

As the quotation from Beetham illustrates, there is little disagreement in the democratisation literature on the meaning of 'democracy', and the goal of instituting stable democracies. With regards to the former, while some, such as Whitehead (1993), may discuss non-liberal notions of democracy in Latin America, the shared focus remains liberal, in the sense that it is used in this chapter. For example, 'democracy' is assumed to be about political *systems*, to be about *institutions* that allow the people some influence over government: it is "a form of rule in which the state apparatus is formally responsible to elected decision-makers who are chosen by means of a universal and equal franchise" (Bromley 1993: 380). This notion of democracy is consistent with the concept of

¹⁶⁴ See for example: Potter (1993), Diamond et al (1989a)

¹⁶⁵ See for example: Ethier (1990), Whitehead (1993), Diamond et al (1989b), Stallings and Kaufman (1989), Pastor (1989), Lowenthal (1991) and Przeworski (1991).

¹⁶⁶ See for example: Hawthorn (1993) and Morrison (1992).

¹⁶⁷ See for example: Bromley (1993).

¹⁶⁸ See for example: Lewis (1990, 1992, 1993), Lewis et al (1993), Glennly (1990) and Przeworski (1991).

¹⁶⁹ See for example Palmer (1959), Kissinger (1957), Maier (1975), Linz and Stepan (1978), Lipset (1960), and O'Donnell (1973).

liberal democracy we have seen in this chapter; democracy means representatives, voting, pressure groups and a bridge spanning the gap between the separate spheres of government and civil society. For the democratisation theorists, such 'democracy' also is an unqualified good: "democracy, after all, is desirable" (Hawthorn 1993: 331).

The democratisation authors do not agree, of course, on all issues. Indeed, there are times when the literature's liberal nature comes into conflict with broader ideological divisions. For example, some authors, such as Berger (1992) and Fukuyama (1992), argue that 'democracy' can only be achieved in market economies (Berger 1992: 9). Others, such as Potter (1993), disagree, suggesting that the development of capitalism may well spur the development of 'formal' democratic structures, but that 'substantive' democracy will only arise with greater levelling out of economic and political power within societies (Potter 1993: 376).

How does this sub-branch of liberal democratic theory approach the issue of the realisation of democracy? The democratisation literature is unusual in recent liberal democratic theory, in that realisation remains an issue at the forefront of theoretical importance. As we have seen, for most postwar liberal democratic theorists, the realist bias led to an understandable decline in theorising the realisation of democracy. This is because 'democracy' has been realised in the political systems studied by these theorists, rendering apparently redundant the need to theorise it at all. It is only when the focus shifts to non-democratic political systems, that realisation is seen to be important.

In the terms of this thesis, however, most democratisation theorists tend to conflate the theorisation of the *achievement* of liberal democracy, with the *realisation* of it. That is, they tend to mix together the conditions required to institute *régime change* toward democracy with the conditions required to guarantee democracy's permanence. Democratisation theory focuses on the most

fundamental democratic transition, from 'authoritarian' rule to 'democratic' rule. This, it appears, will usually require major political, social, cultural and perhaps, economic changes. A good representative sample would be Hall's description of the number of 'enabling' factors for democratic régime change. Some are structural and economic, such as:

sequence [it is easier to institute democracy in countries with pre-existing liberal economic structures, than command economies];

property [excessive concentration of property ownership militates against democratic transformation];

state [powerful repressive forces, such as the army will resist democratisation, especially if they have been complicit in atrocities];

international [world powers, such as the USA may play important roles in supporting democratic change] (Hall 1993: 277-280).

Other enabling factors are social and cultural:

attitudes [general commitment to the democratic process and to abide by its outcomes];

civil society [democratisation requires the presence of "strong and autonomous social groups able to balance excessive concentrations of power" and a general commitment to civility];

single culture [homogeneity promotes democracy better than diversity]; and

memory [strong cultural presence of historical reasons for believing in democracy] (Hall 1993: 281-283).

Democratisation theory is consistent with the approach taken by the two Mills to realising democracy. As such it adds little to the argument, other than confirming what we already know. Stripped of its descriptive trappings, the democratisation thesis is that the achievement of liberal democracy's characteristics in a given society will realise liberal democracy. Hall's list of 'enabling factors', therefore, appear simply to be a newer version of the lists prepared by Cohen and Pennock mentioned earlier. It is, basically, a statement of liberal democracy's self-image.¹⁷⁰ It endorses the (liberal) democratic theoretical

¹⁷⁰ Potter describes this approach as resembling a "shopping list" which "can provide a useful checklist of factors to be borne in mind when trying to grapple with detailed questions about democracy" (Potter 1993: 355).

expectation that 'democracy' means representative democracy, as the only realisable form. The realisation of liberal democracy is to be found in careful political, cultural and economic institutional design, in order to create a structure in which a limited, elected, government can govern, but (hopefully) not oppress.

Conclusion

While the difference between JS Mill's developmental democracy and James Mill's protective model is vital in understanding how it is that liberal democrats can adopt radically opposing views on matters to do with the appropriate role of the state, the difference can mask many similarities. Following the interest of this thesis, the most important point of commonality lies in the issue of realisation in liberal democratic theory. Liberal democrats, whether protective or developmental, utilitarian (like the two Mills) or contractarian (such as Rawls), pluralist or élitist, share similar views on the realisation of liberal democracy. Roughly speaking, liberal democrats present theories that are built on variations on a theme of containment. In this, they are little different from their republican colleagues. However, what is different, is that liberal democratic containment is reflected in a concern for institutional design, the intention of which is to limit the need for republican-style virtuous self-control.

There are at least four dimensions to the liberal democratic containment process. They relate to: the containment of individuals by government; the containment of the influence government has over the community; the containment of the direct influence which the community has over government; and containment of the scope for the community to influence the political process. Each of these four dimensions is present in liberal democratic theory. One of the ways theorists of liberal democracy differ from one another is in the order and weight they give them. Ultimately, this containment process can be read as an attempt to contain politics itself, within a sphere separate from daily life.

The first mode of containment, that of the role of government in containing the behaviour of individuals, is the liberal *raison d'être* of all forms of government, whether democratic or not. It is an extension of the liberal possessive-individualist assumption, in which government is needed to impose order on social and economic relations through its monopoly over civil power, principally through the law. No liberal denies the need for government; rather, the question is what form it takes and what is its scope for action.

The second mode of containment in liberal democratic theory is that of containing the government. Again, there is nothing intrinsically democratic about seeking to limit the extent to which governments can appropriately intervene in civil society. Rights-based and contractarian theories, for example, from Locke to Nozick and Rawls, place a heavy emphasis on the need to make clear the limits of governmental action. While the last would count himself a democrat,¹⁷¹ the other two are not.¹⁷² However, as we saw in the case of James and John Stuart Mill, democracy can easily be adopted as an expedient means for containing government. This containment is found not only in the operations of liberal democratic assembly (as a deliberative, checking body), but also both in the structures it requires to exist, and in the electoral process itself. The former, in the sense of a 'division of powers', is understood as constitutional arrangements that quite explicitly mark out and contain the territory for the actions of government. Lines of accountability within these arrangements serve to reinforce the arrangements themselves. As for the latter, elections, according to James Mill or the competitive élite theorists such as Schumpeter (1976), are the ultimate check on government.

¹⁷¹ See Barber (1988: 54-119).

¹⁷² See Nozick (1974).

The third mode of containment is that of containing the amount of direct influence the community has over government. This is a highly variable notion in theories of liberal democracy. All share it to a certain extent, because liberal theory separates democracy from government. In republican theory, democracy is government: *self-government*. The example of the two Mills shows that in liberal theory, however, democracy is a process that affects government, but is not government itself. We know this simply because liberalism in theory, as well as practice, does not need democracy in order to exist (Macpherson 1972: 6). Liberalism does, however, need government.

The principal means by which liberal democratic theorists seek to contain the amount of direct influence the community has over government, has already been mentioned. The separation of powers argument cordons much of 'government' off from the direct influence of the people. The process of representation itself also removes people from the day to day business of government by passing the checking responsibility onto a legislative assembly. In basic structure, therefore, liberal representative democracy seems designed to contain the amount of direct influence the community has over the business of government. Government, as both Mills and, fifty years later, Weber,¹⁷³ argued, is a business for experts, technicians and the like. Democracy is a means of ensuring that those technicians are doing the right job, but it is not about doing that job.¹⁷⁴

Perhaps the area of greatest divergence within liberal democratic theory relates to the fourth mode of containment, namely the containment of the scope for the

¹⁷³ See Weber (1978).

¹⁷⁴ As an aside, it is worth noting that there is something of a rival tradition of direct democracy within existing liberal democracies. These are notable in polities modelled on *republican* ideals, particularly the United States of America and Switzerland. Direct democratic *devices*, such as initiative, referendum and recall are in operation in these states, but they remain institutional augmentations to liberal democratic structures. They do not seek, for example, to make the citizens govern themselves, but to increase the level of direct influence citizens have over government. See further: Carter (1988), Cronin (1989), Davis (1912), Martin (1931), Morgan (1988), Munro (1912), Schmidt (1989), Swan (1912), Walker (1987), and Wilcox (1912).

community to influence the political process. As we have already seen, most twentieth century (American) 'democratic theory', focuses on this aspect. Pluralist theory, interest group theory, participatory theory, 'public spheres' theory,¹⁷⁵ all seek to describe and theorise appropriate ways in which the community influences the democratic process beyond merely voting. Competitive élitism, on the other hand, expresses a more nineteenth century view in which the ballot is the ultimate weapon in changing and legitimising governmental leadership, drawn from a small range of alternatives. On the strength of my reading of "Representative Government", John Stuart Mill would be happy with this aspect of competitive élite theory. He would not, however, be satisfied with the passivity with which competitive élite theorists imbue citizens (Thompson 1976: 194).

Differences among theories of liberal democracy often revolve around differing conceptions of this multi-layered containment process. These conceptions are largely institutional rather than personal. The vital point for this chapter is that the example of the two Mills shows that the institutional containment of democracy was thought necessary to enable its realisation. Uncontained democracy, such as direct democracy, was unrealisable and therefore not worth theorising.

The realisation of democracy in liberal democratic theory departs strongly from republican thought. Republicans, as we have seen, ground the realisation of their democratic theory in the concept of virtue. Liberals, by defining realisable democracy in institutional terms, can 'economise on virtue'. Virtue, so central to the republican model, is peripheral to liberal democratic theory. True, James Mill takes a Platonic turn towards the virtue of the middle rank, but, as JS Mill showed, this was not necessary to utilitarian theory in particular, or liberal theory

¹⁷⁵ We will return to the last two in Chapter Five.

in general. In other words, the contemporary critics of the republican revival are quite correct in pointing out that civic virtue *can* find a place in liberal theory, but they tend to miss the point about whether it is *necessary*. Virtue, while not incompatible with some versions of liberal democratic theory, is no longer necessary. Indeed, it would be easy to mount a utilitarian argument against republican virtue, on the grounds that it limits one's ability to maximise one's utility. The pursuit of virtue could be seen as a distortion of the utilitarian calculus, and would only be justifiable if the whole community practised civic virtue, which even republicans considered doubtful.

The reasons for liberal democratic theory's departure from the republican model lie in liberalism itself. The discussion of the republican mode of democratic theory centred on its response to the problem of institutional degeneration. The response was to require of the republican citizen a high degree of personal and political virtue. To generate this virtue, citizens must control their actions and perhaps their passions, to bring them into line with a normative good variously named, the common good, the General Will etc. This Will is above society, yet produced by it. Liberalism, Greenleaf argues, on the other hand is far more "anthropocentric" in that it grounds its goals not in some quasi-transcendental conception of the 'good', but rather in simpler notions of human 'reality'.¹⁷⁶ This is why liberalism has been accused of not 'caring for souls',¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁶ Greenleaf (1972:132). Greenleaf, a British Idealist, is following the triadic conception of the history of political thought, made popular by Oakeshott, who in his introduction to *Hobbes on Civil Association* (1975), divides the history of political thought into three traditions:

The first of these traditions is distinguished by the master-conceptions of Reason and Nature. It is coeval with our civilization; it has an unbroken history into the modern world; it has survived by a matchless power of adaptability all the changes of the European consciousness. The master-conceptions of the second are Will and Artifice. It too springs from the soil of Greece, and has drawn inspiration from many sources, not least from Israel and Islam. The third tradition is of later birth, not appearing until the eighteenth century. The cosmology it reflects in its still unsettled surface is the world seen on the analogy of human history. Its master-conception is the Rational Will, and its followers may be excused the belief that in

and for shifting the goals of theory and human action from the 'good' to the 'right'.¹⁷⁸ Both of these concerns illustrate liberalism's worldly basis. Caring 'for souls' and for the 'good' require a transcendent notion of what the 'good' is, in all cases, and how this can be translated into a theory that judges a person's actions in terms of this 'good'. Liberalism does not provide us with such a transcendent, immutable, and teleological standpoint. Instead, as we have seen, most liberal democratic theory simply addresses the behaviour of men and women as they are, or are thought to be.

Liberal democratic theory is structured in a way that reflects the assumed norms of human behaviour and capacities. Not surprisingly, therefore, liberal democratic theory is deeply concerned with 'reality' and the realisability of theoretical constructs. As we see in the thought of the two Mills, the perfect form of government is rejected in favour of the practical or realistic form of government. In so doing 'practicality' or 'reality' may be redefined as 'perfection' itself. JS Mill does this in "Representative Government" (JS Mill 1991a: 256). We can see this sentiment strongly in the postwar 'realist'/'operational' democratic theory, that we discussed earlier.¹⁷⁹ Reality and

it the truths of the first two traditions are fulfilled and their errors find a happy release (Oakeshott 1975: 7).

Greenleaf follows this Hegelian dialectical approach to the history of political thought. The first two traditions are antithetical, one (Oakeshott's 'Reason and Nature') posits a higher or transcendental source of law, the other ('Will and Artifice') is "anthropocentric ... rest[ing] on a satisfaction of the demands of the human will" (Greenleaf 1972: 132). An example of the first tradition would be Plato, with his transcendental concept of the good (see Plato's *Republic* (1955) or *Gorgias* (1979)). Examples of the second would be liberals such as Hobbes, Locke and the Utilitarians. The third, ('Rational Will') is a synthesis of the previous two based on a "criterion that was rational yet not transcendental, one that concretely pertained to man's real situation and was satisfactory to the individual yet was not the outcome of his particular purpose or simply the reflection of the rudimentary will which seeks fulfilment in any desire or interest regardless of its quality" (Greenleaf 1972: 133). Rousseau is seen as pioneering this third stream, in his concept of the General Will (Greenleaf 1972: 133). For a more detailed reading of the triadic conception of political thought, see Boucher (1986).

¹⁷⁷ Sunstein (1991: 4).

¹⁷⁸ Dworkin (1990:4-5); and Rawls (1984: 48-53) - who argues that in liberalism the 'right' is prior to the good. See also: Barry (1994), Graham (1992), and McGregor (1988).

¹⁷⁹ For example Kirkpatrick (1981). In contrast see Goodwin (1980).

human artifice are to be a touchstone by which theories may be judged. This could be regarded as a 'new normativism', because realist theory generates its own justificatory principle, namely, realisability.¹⁸⁰

The seeds of this approach to twentieth century liberal democratic theory were sown in previous centuries. The separation of government from the people enables both to be treated as entities in themselves. The drive, begun by the likes of Comte, towards a science of society, encouraged and legitimised the use of scientific method in studying social and political phenomena. This reached new heights in the behavioural approach to political studies and theory in postwar America. Justification, an important component in earlier liberal democratic theory, became considered less necessary, except as a protective measure against critique. Internally at least, there was little requirement in postwar liberal democratic theory for liberal democracy to be justified, as it already exists. What is the point, Sartori asks, of having to justify the existence of something that already exists, and for which there is no working alternative available (Sartori 1965: 460-465)?¹⁸¹

Liberal democratic theorists do, however, continue to share some concerns with their republican forebears. We can see an example of this in their anxiety about tyranny, and the need to protect the individual from inappropriate governmental interference. Majoritarian democracy is especially vulnerable to liberal concerns in relation to its potential to be a vehicle for attacks on individual 'rights'. The liberal democratic theorist's response is not, however, to seek conformity with a super societal General Will through individual virtue, as this

¹⁸⁰ See Held (1987: 196).

¹⁸¹ There remains something of a cottage industry in justifying liberal democracy. See for example: Bellamy (1994), Graham (1992) (cf Knowles 1995), Holden (1983: 302-305), Morely (1921: 92), Nelson (1980), Levine (1978), Parekh (1993: 167-175), Pennock (1971: 88), Railton (1983: 153-156), and Weithman (1985).

would be to concede that such a Will exists. The answer is to seek appropriate behaviour through institutional design, to shift the forces of containment from the individual to the political institution.

In shifting the forces of containment from the individual to the institution, liberal democratic theorists generate a narrowing in the meaning and value of democracy. They have built a structure that theorises politics out of the realm of day-to-day living, and into the gap between civil society and the separate realm of government. This can be seen as the ultimate containment of politics itself, and by extension, of democracy as well. The democratic life, as represented by republican theories, is in some liberal democratic theory reduced to a periodic choice of rulers, from a predetermined set of possible candidates. Rousseau anticipates this in his comment that:

The people of England regards itself as free; but it is grossly mistaken; it is free only during the election of members of parliament. As soon as they are elected, slavery overtakes it, and it is nothing. The use it makes of the short moments of liberty it enjoys shows indeed that it deserves to lose them (Rousseau 1973e: 266).

It is in this context that I now turn to examining liberalism's main ideological rival, socialism, to outline its approach to the realisation of democracy.

CHAPTER FIVE

Competing Priorities: Democracy and Socialism in Socialist Democratic Theory

Few have realised how genuine a religion it [socialism] is. Like all vital religions, its focus is, not merely in a faith, but in a hope. Socialism, through which alone the General Will of the sovereign people can express itself, is a future condition of blessedness, at least as remote in time as indefinable in character as the New Jerusalem; and Marxists, like some early Fathers of the Christian Church, have had to fight their hottest battles against Utopian heretics, from Proudhon to Herbert Morrison, who have aspired to anticipate the promise of blessedness by experiments in communal co-operation under the conditions of an unregenerated world (Lord Percy of Newcastle 1954: 41).

This chapter is about liberalism's great ideological rival, socialism, and its relationship with the idea of democracy. At the close of the last chapter, we saw Rousseau describe liberalism's version of the democratic idea as a pale shadow of its republican alternative. Socialist theorists of democracy pick up this refrain.

In its relationship with democracy, socialism stands apart from liberalism, republicanism and classical political thought. As we have just seen, liberalism adopted democracy well into its development, with one of its great challenges being to realise democracy while maintaining the liberal core. Republicans generally regard democracy as desirable, but often consider it unlikely to be realised. The Ancients did not regard democracy as desirable, nor theoretically realisable, because of its position as one stage in a political cycle of degeneration. Prior to the rise of socialist thought, therefore, democracy was something of an oddity. Its realisation could be theorised positively or negatively in isolation from the actuality of democracy. For socialism, however, unlike its older ideological rivals, 'democracy' existed as a plausibly realisable form of government, if not always a desirable one, by the time that socialism became a significant theoretical and political movement in the nineteenth century. As we will see, this impacts on

the ways in which the realisation of socialist democracy itself tends to be theorised.

This chapter will show that the various sub-branches of socialist thought share a number of assumptions that bear directly on their theoretical approach to realising socialist democracy. This is found, in particular, in the positive mood with which they uniformly view the notion of change, primarily reflected in the desire to break out of the liberal containment of democracy to a formal sphere of government, separate from civil society.

While socialist theorists of democracy are united by their positive mood toward change, they are divided by the priority that democracy holds in their theories. This chapter argues that the priority of democracy and its realisation in socialist thought falls on a continuum. As a rule of thumb, the lower the level of priority that 'democracy' is thought to have relative to 'socialism', the easier it becomes to defer theorising the realisation of democracy. Conversely, as democracy asserts a greater place in these theories, perhaps even to the extent of being a good independent of socialism, its realisation becomes a problem.

Before turning to our discussion of socialist theories of democracy, there is a short discussion of the terminology to be used in this chapter, followed by an outline of the historiographical literature's account of socialist democratic theory. It is noted that, in general, the literature dwells on the theories of socialism themselves, especially that of Karl Marx, rather than socialist theories of democracy. This leads to a neglect of the ways in which socialists approach the issue of the realisation of democracy. Further, many historians of democratic theory tend to equate socialist thought with that of Marx and Lenin, and, as a consequence, underrate other socialist theories which give different priority to democracy and its realisation.

Following our examination of the historiographical literature's account of socialist theories of democracy, the chapter then turns to an examination of the works of Karl Marx on democracy. Marx's thought lies at one extreme of the continuum mentioned above. Marx, it is argued, regards the realisation of democracy to be a consequence of the realisation of socialism. A detailed examination of Marx's works on democracy shows that his notion of it is rather conventional, even 'liberal', in terms of its institutions. Marx's notion of democracy revolves around the franchise. Through the exercise of the vote, the citizenry transfer their interest to their representatives, who act on their behalf. From his earliest anti-Hegelian writings, to his late commentaries on the Paris Commune and the Gotha Programme, Marx remains consistent about what he means by 'democracy', and how it is to be realised. Socialist democracy may operate through 'liberal' institutions, but only in a post-revolutionary context. It is only in this context that the majority will understand their 'true' interests, and as a consequence, their democratic vote will have a radical cast. To a large extent, then, Marx defers the issue of the realisation of democracy until after the realisation of socialism.

After discussing Marx's approach to the realisation of socialist democracy, the chapter turns to a different theoretical grouping of socialist thinkers who give a different priority, but similar meaning to democracy. We find examples of this in the social democratic thought of Eduard Bernstein and 'Eurocommunist' theorists. It is argued that these theorists seek to use the institutions of liberal democracy to realise socialism. The realisation of democracy does not loom large in this literature, as, with a few adjustments, liberal democracy could just as well be socialist democracy. As with many recent liberal democratic theorists, social democrats do not give substantive theoretical attention to the realisation of democracy because, to all intents and purposes, it has already been realised. What matters for these theorists is the use of liberal democratic institutions to transform capitalism to socialism, an issue outside the scope of this thesis.

Our scan across the continuum of the priority given by socialist theorists to democracy finds its other extreme in those socialists who, like the social democrats, regard democracy as a means of realising socialism, but unlike the social democrats, argue that democracy is something that has not, or cannot, be realised by liberal democratic institutions. A brief examination of the work of Carole Pateman on participatory theory and Jürgen Habermas on ‘discursive’ democracy reveals that the realisation of democracy is a key problem for their theories. Democracy is taken to mean more than just the institutions of liberal democracy, but it cannot wait for a socialist revolution in order to be realised. In addition to regarding democracy as a means of realising socialism, democracy has an independent value for these theorists. The means chosen for realising this democracy have strong echoes of the civic virtue of republican theory: democracy is realised when the participants internalise the rules of democratic behaviour and modify their actions accordingly. Unlike the republicans we examined in Chapter Three, however, this method of realising democracy remains only sketchily addressed in the works of these two theorists. Ultimately, it is noted that the turn toward the language of moderation and virtue is at odds with the negative mood about change that motivated its original republican use.

Terminology

Life is too short and interesting to be caught up in endless, circular terminological and ‘suffixal’ debates. Socialist thought, with its heritage of theory and intellectual rigour, is characterised by a proliferation of competing descriptive terms for different conceptions of socialism, be they pejorative, approving or relatively neutral. In the enormous body of socialist literature, we find four main root forms used to describe various schools of socialist thought: the generic (Socialism, Communism, Utopianism, Anarchism, Syndicalism, Labourism etc); the specific (Bolshevism, Menshevism, Fabianism, Chartism, New Leftism etc); the composite (social democracy, democratic socialism, guild

socialism, anarcho-syndicalism, Eurocommunism, Christian socialism etc); and, the personally derived (Marxism, Leninism, Maoism, Trotskyism, Stalinism, Owenism, Proudhonism, Blanquism etc).

Beyond the doctrine-defining 'isms', we find competing suffixal types denoting arcane distinctions between '-ists', '-ians' and '-ites'. One could inadvertently deeply offend followers of the works of Leon Trotsky, for example, by calling them 'Trotskyites', when the linguistically identical term 'Trotskyists' would yield no such response. Is there a difference between 'Marxist' analyses of liberalism and 'Marxian' analyses?¹⁸² What is the extent and nature of the connection (if any) between the person, Marx, his thought, and the label 'Marxism'? At times, it is hard to find in the literature on 'Marxism' much of a connection between the man and the ideology at all. One wonders whether adding the label 'Marxist' to a set of thoughts or practices is any more meaningful than adding the epithet 'democratic' to another set.¹⁸³

To avoid doctrinal disputes, the term 'socialism' will be used in this chapter as the generic term encompassing the whole of the body of the literature covered. The popularly accepted generic sub-terms, such as: social democracy; utopian socialism; Fabian socialism; and the New Left; will also be used in preference to personally derived 'isms'. This will leave the personal pronoun to describe the work of the person alone. 'Marx', then, will mean Marx. People claiming to be following a particular thinker, will be identified as such, in preference to being given the personally derived generic label (eg Marxist). This is of course consistent with Marx's famous pithy comment: "I am not a Marxist".

¹⁸² Gray (1986) seems comfortable with using both terms interchangeably.

¹⁸³ See Mayo (1955) as an example of Cold War conflation of Soviet totalitarianism with all things 'Marxist'.

The historiographical literature on socialist democratic theory

The clarity that is a hallmark of the historiographical literature's account of liberal democratic theory deserts it as it turns to socialist theory and its relationship with democracy. Socialism itself tends to occupy centre stage, with democracy often cutting a dim figure in the background. There is an overwhelming focus on the thought of Marx and Lenin. This 'revolutionary' arm of socialist thought is presented somewhat in isolation from other non-revolutionary socialist theorists. The latter are not entirely ignored, feeding into much of the literature's discussion of 'contemporary' democratic theory. Overall, however, it is fair to say that the discussion of socialist theories of democracy is decidedly one dimensional, often providing a vehicle for a critique of the Marx-Lenin intellectual and political tradition, particularly in the light of the political practices of the eastern bloc states for most of the twentieth century. Where the historiographical literature discusses Marx's political theory in a more positive light, it is generally as a tool for critiquing liberal democracy's shortcomings, not as a positive example of democratic theory.

The historiographical literature is poor in delivering on the four criteria we identified at the outset of the thesis. The first criterion, the meaning of 'democracy' in socialist theory, is rarely presented clearly, despite it being a central feature of most socialist thought. Instead, what is presented is the socialist (generally Marxist) critique of capitalism and liberalism, which, it would appear, also constitutes a critique of liberal democracy. As we will see below, socialist theoretical justifications of democracy and arguments about how it might be achieved, are left as a subtext to the justification and achievement of socialism. In other words, these two criteria identified earlier are also under-unexplored. Realisation, the fourth criterion and central focus of this thesis, is hardly mentioned as all.

The historiographical literature is quite consistent in its account of the key aspects of Marx's critique of capitalism, how he thought the transformation to socialism from capitalism was likely to occur, and what the new political structure (such as it would be) might look like. Socialism promised a fuller development of humanity and an end to oppression. Its origins, it is argued, lie in a reaction to the chaos, oppression and inequalities of capitalism, and its ideology, liberalism.¹⁸⁴ Socialism's motivation was, Held contends, drawn from the *lack* of freedom that liberal economies actually produced (Held 1987: 136). As is illustrated elsewhere in this thesis,¹⁸⁵ liberalism has a restricted conception of freedom, where freedom is understood as a condition produced by the absence of constraint. Such 'negative' freedom is a right, a possession. Socialism's conception of freedom is more positive, involving the capacity to realise desires. Where a liberal would say "I may do x", a socialist would say "I can do x". As such, socialism's concerns combine both the liberal concern for personal liberty with a focus on the economic and, thereby, social inequalities produced by capitalism that prevent the realisation of the liberal dream (Held 1987: 105).

As noted above, the historiographical literature is often rather vague on the meaning of 'democracy' in socialist thought, and most especially in Marx's thought. Macpherson, however, is an exception. Marx, he says, uses the word democracy "in its original and then normal sense" (Macpherson 1972: 15). This sense recalls Aristotle's description of democracy as the rule of the most numerous class, the poor. Thus, Macpherson quotes Marx in *The Communist Manifesto*: "the first step of the revolution by the working class, is to raise the proletariat to the position of ruling class, to win the battle for democracy" (Marx quoted in Macpherson 1972: 15). Marx's definition of democracy, as reported by

¹⁸⁴ See for example: Lipson (1964: 211) and Mayo (1960: 249-254).

¹⁸⁵ See Appendix B.

Macpherson, is consistent with the tenor of much of the historiographical literature's attempts to grapple with socialist thought.¹⁸⁶ The core proposition at the heart of socialist thought is that capitalist 'democracy' does not deliver 'true' democracy, which, the historiographical literature notes, socialists argue that only socialism can deliver.¹⁸⁷

In the historiographical literature, it is argued that Marx defines 'rule' and 'ruling class' in such a way that allows for a ruling class to rule outside the visible structures of government. Held, for example, spends some time examining *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* as a means of outlining this 'base-superstructure' argument (Held 1987: 108-121). Marx's analysis was based on an economic theory of historical change and, as a consequence, he defined the ruling class as the dominant economic class. In a capitalist economy, the ruling class is the capitalist class, the bourgeoisie. Being a ruling class does not necessarily entail active engagement in the formal structures of government. In fact, the formal structures of government can be ordered in such a way as to mask the power of the ruling class while not diminishing its actual influence. This can be seen in the extension of male suffrage in the nineteenth century to include most of the non-property owning classes. The catch, for Marx, was that such an extension merely ceded public power, while private privilege remained unaffected and, importantly, the relations of economic power upon which the capitalist mode of production depended, was protected. The government in a capitalist economy, whether elected (or governed) by workers or not, is dependent on capitalism for its survival. The government will, therefore, not act in a way that destroys its own foundations, namely, the capitalist mode of production. This instinct for self-preservation *may* lead the government to act to ensure its long term survival by

¹⁸⁶ See for example: Levin (1983:79).

¹⁸⁷ Sartori (1965: 416-444).

allowing short term concessions to a disgruntled proletariat, as Marx argues occurred in France in 1848. Thus, the government may be relatively autonomous, but remains constrained. As Held puts it “a dominant economic class can *rule without directly governing*” (Held 1987: 120 - original emphasis).

If liberal democracy delivers only ‘formal’ democracy, without transferring the real power to the people, what then would a socialist democracy deliver? Opinions are divided among socialists and in the historians of democratic theory over this matter. What emerges in the literature is a number of competing characterisations of socialism, which are distinguished by the extent to which the respective authors associate Marx, and other socialists, with the views of Lenin and the practical realities of the totalitarian politics of the former Soviet Union. This is directly related to the extent to which socialism is thought to be compatible with democracy. Macpherson, for example, argues that Marx and Lenin saw democracy as a class-based rule, which could be strictly relevant only in the middle stage of the transition from capitalism to communism. This middle stage, socialism, or ‘the dictatorship of the proletariat’ would be democratic, in the sense of the largest class ruling (Macpherson 1972: 14-15). Other authors are less charitable, disavowing any substantive link between socialism (and most especially Leninism) and democracy: “I believe that further investigation into the ... [socialist] meaning of ‘democracy’ is not worth the trouble. I say again: there is none in Lenin, and that is all the more reason why there is none after him” (Sartori 1965: 425).¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁸ For example, among those that draw a strong, sometimes inevitable, link between socialism, Marx, Lenin and totalitarianism, we can find: Hattersley (1930: 232), Delisle Burns 1935: 52-61, and less stridently: Harding (1992) and Levin (1983). Others link socialism with Marx (and to a lesser extent, Lenin) but argue that this could lead to a form of democracy: Mayo (1960: 249-254), Held (1987), and Pennock (1979). Others acknowledge that there could be a link between socialism and democracy, and that this may not necessarily be mediated through Marx: Callinicos (1993) and Lipson (1964).

As a general rule, the more recent the historian of democratic theory, the less strongly the association with totalitarianism is made and, as a consequence, the more kindly the assessment is made of Marx's views on democracy. The failure of the Soviet Union appears to have freed Marx to a certain extent from a situation where, unfairly, the ideas of one person were judged through the filter of the practices of one bloc of states. In re-focusing on the ideas rather than subsequent political practices, these more recent historiographical authors have attempted to accord to Marx, and to a lesser extent, Lenin, the same status they have given to liberalism and republicanism.¹⁸⁹

While Marx clearly was in favour of democracy and, indeed, saw socialism as engendering democracy, he was notoriously vague on the details. Levin, for example, notes that Marx and Engels both described themselves primarily as 'democrats' in the 1840s, but after the events of 1848 shunned the term in isolation, as they felt it to be tainted by the formalism and narrowness of liberal democracy (Levin 1983: 79). Democracy now became a stage in the Marxist project rather than an end in itself.

The historiographical literature looks to three major texts to illustrate the alleged nature of Marx's concept of democracy. The texts referred to are also some of Marx's most rhetorical pieces. They are his contributions to the political events of the day: *The Communist Manifesto*; *The Critique of the Gotha Program*; and, *The Civil War in France*. Through these works, Marx moves from "what" democracy might deliver (the series of largely economic demands in *The Communist Manifesto*), to "how" a proletarian revolution might be "steered" (such as in the ill-fated Paris Commune) (Sartori 1965: 417-418).¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁹ See for example: Callinicos (1993).

¹⁹⁰ Sartori's choice of "steer" is intriguing, given that the Latin root of "govern", *gubernare*, originally meant "to steer". Consciously or not, Sartori has slipped into the liberal language that

Marx's work on the Paris Commune of 1871 is used in the historiographical literature as an apparent generic description of his vision of socialist democracy, despite his well-known dislike of 'blueprints'.¹⁹¹ The Paris Commune, we are told, was an example of the 'dictatorship of the proletariat', which was in turn a precursor to genuine communism:

It [the Commune] was to make a reality of democracy by involving all citizens in all aspects of the governmental process and it was to retain control over all its functionaries by electing them all, paying them workmen's wages, and keeping them subject to immediate recall by their constituents (Harding 1992: 165).¹⁹²

In addition to focusing on Marx's 'model' of democracy, Lenin's thought on democracy is also reported widely in the historiographical literature. The locus of discussion is his analysis of the state and, in particular, how he saw democracy as a form of state which ultimately would be superseded by communism. Levin quotes Lenin on this issue: "Democracy is a form of the state, one of its varieties" (Levin 1983: 92). Unlike Marx, Lenin is presented as using 'democracy' to signify not the rule by the most numerous class, but rule by the ruling class. Democracy, therefore, is something of a chameleon; it takes on the characteristics of its surroundings. Capitalism engenders capitalist (liberal) democracy, socialism would engender socialist democracy. Lenin's "jaundiced" view of (liberal) democracy, is coupled with his belief that the state under communism would disappear (the much misused "wither away") (Harding 1992: 164). In the meantime however, socialism, identified as self-government, and modelled on the Paris Commune, would deliver "direct, participative and transformative"

equates government with the management and direction of the state. This is not surprising given Sartori's robust defence of the liberal representative model of democracy.

¹⁹¹ Harding (1992) and Sartori (1965), for example, both seem to assume that the Paris Commune was socialist democracy in action. Held, however, is more circumspect, but still sees fit to quote *The Civil War in France* at great length (1987: 128-130).

¹⁹² It is strange that Marx's contemporary writings on the Paris Commune of 1871, are used in the historiographical literature as an example of what his 'vision' of socialist democracy could look like. No mention is made of the fact that the Communards were far more influenced by the likes of Proudhon and the anarcho-syndicalists than Marx.

democracy by way of the soviets (Harding 1992: 164-165). This would replace the limitations of distant institutions of liberal democracy with local control over all public affairs.

As noted above, the historiographical literature's account of socialism and democracy is largely an account of Marxism/Leninism and democracy. The substantial nineteenth and early twentieth century democratic socialist movements occupy a small space in the literature,¹⁹³ and usually appear as the historical predecessors for a myriad of socialist splinters, which are often clustered together under some catch-all phrase such as "the contemporary debates".¹⁹⁴ The problem with things 'contemporary', is that they remain so only for a short time. This means that in much of the older literature what is 'contemporary' is merely a variation on an earlier theme. It is, however, worth noting the features of the contemporary socialist theories, in as much as they relate to the history of the idea of democracy.

The crux of these theories, insofar as they are covered by the historiographical literature, is the evolutionary transformation of the liberal democratic state. Gone is the exhortation to 'smashing' or overthrowing the state. Gone, too, is the rhetoric of communism and its concomitant unsavoury history. The goal is, at minimum, to extend the sphere of democratic activity beyond the formal political sphere of liberal democracy and into other spheres that affect the daily lives of people. This is particularly so in the area of the 'private', which liberalism divorces from the public, democratic realm. Held notes, for example, that the participatory movement of the 1960s and beyond, focused its energies upon

¹⁹³ For example: Hattersley (1930: 178-179), Harris (1983), Lipson (1964: 255 & 364-366), and Pennock (1979: 121).

¹⁹⁴ For example: Rejai (1967), Cohen (1971: 277-288) and Held (1987: 243-299 & 1993: 12-52).

politicising and, thereby, democratising the private realm of work, social relations, the family, and property (Held 1987: 254-261).

‘Industrial’, ‘economic’ and ‘social’ democracy are mentioned in the historiographical literature, but with a couple of exceptions, not discussed in any detail.¹⁹⁵ Harris, for example, discusses the concept of ‘social democracy’, suggesting that it is about more than just extending the boundaries of democratic decision-making to the social realm, it is about “making democracy more social”. It is about working out socially acceptable states of affairs in society, and linking the production of these to democracy (Harris 1983: 224 & 234). Callinicos defends a more orthodox and concrete vision of socialist democracy, arguing that it remains an appropriate vision in terms of the economic and social lives of people in the global age. Rather than being implausible, clumsy or potentially totalising, collective self-determination in all spheres of life, in his view, makes greater rather than less sense in the post-Cold War era. Liberalism, he argues, need not be the lens through which all theories of democracy is judged: the collapse of the Soviet Union demonstrates that “nothing has to be the way it is” (Callinicos 1993: 211).

If we recap the historiographical literature’s account of socialist theories of democracy, then, it is fair to say that there is an overwhelming focus on the works of Marx and the revolutionary socialist tradition. The socialist theoretical definition of democracy is rarely explicated, but where it is, it is taken to mean the rule by the most numerous class, perhaps as a temporary form of the State prior to its dissolution. The justification of democracy in socialist theory is also rarely discussed, but could, perhaps, be inferred from the justification of socialism, as the political system that would provide for true freedom of the people and an end to the oppression of capitalism. Similarly, the achievement of democracy under

¹⁹⁵ Held’s discussion (1987) is probably the best, but is now dating rapidly.

socialism could perhaps be viewed in terms of the achievement of socialism. Here, Marx's political works, especially those on the Paris Commune, provides the historians of democratic theory with some material to work on. However, given the association in much of the literature of socialism with the realities of politics in the former Soviet Union and China, one gets a strong sense that many authors regard socialism as neither justifiable nor achievable, and socialist 'democracy' as an oxymoron. This emphasises most starkly the political dimension of much of this literature, first commented on in Chapter One.

What of the central theme of this thesis, the issue of realisation in the theories of democracy? It has not been mentioned in this brief overview of the historiographical literature's account of socialist theories of democracy because it simply does not arise. As we will see below, there are good reasons why it is difficult to tease out the ways in which socialists theorise the realisation of democracy. Despite the difficulty, it is unfortunate that, by omission, it is implied that socialist democratic theory does not have a dimension of realisation in it. As we will now see, tracing the various ways socialists theorise the realisation of democracy is very useful in gaining an understanding of this most complex, and frequently theorised, of ideologies.

The realisation of socialist democracy: Marx, Hegel and the priority of socialism

To assess Karl Marx's influence on the field of democratic theory is not a straightforward task. Directly, his work on democracy is surprisingly insubstantial. Indirectly, his influence has been enormous in shaping the response by socialists to the limitations they perceive in liberal democratic theory. As a result, far more has been written *about* Marx and the theory of democracy, than he ever penned on the subject.¹⁹⁶ Naturally this leaves authors with the difficult and

¹⁹⁶ On Marx and democracy, see for example: Carver (1992), Crocker (1981), Cropsey (1986), Debrizzi (1982), Diskin (1992), Doveton (1994), Easton (1974 & 1981), Femia (1985), Fischer

sometimes problematic task of filling in gaps in Marx's work on democracy based on what they think he may have said, had he turned his mind to the subject for longer.

Marx's legacy on democracy comes in two main forms: the political and the philosophical. The former is the more widely discussed than the latter, with the historiographical literature leaving this difficult, dense material for more specialised authors. This is unfortunate because there is much in Marx's early struggles with his Hegelian muse that directly influences his later more straightforward political work on democracy. Exploring these influences can assist in overcoming the distortion associated with attempts to create a 'model' of democracy based purely on Marx's later political work.¹⁹⁷

In the following discussion I will examine both aspects of Marx's thought mentioned above. This will serve two purposes: firstly, it will act to clarify the discussion of Marx's political writings on democracy in the historiographical literature and, secondly, it will draw out the means by which Marx theorises the 'realisation' of democracy. We will find that, across his works, Marx is consistent in his definition and justification of socialist democracy. Marx's notion of democracy revolves around the franchise and its ability to translate the interests of the voters into governmental action. We will also find, however, that Marx changes his position on the relative priority of democracy in his theory. The young Marx views the realisation of democracy as a revolutionary end in itself, while the older Marx sees it as a product of the realisation of socialism, by

(1981), Geras (1994), Gilbert (1986), Hoffman (1982), Held (1993), Hunt (1980), Kiss (1982), Krancberg (1982), Louw (1991), Mayo (1955), Miller (1986), Mostov (1989), and Springborg (1984).

¹⁹⁷ This distortion, which is most apparent in the historiographical literature, generates a number of problems. Firstly, there is the problem of generalising from what were mostly comments by Marx on specific political events and issues. Secondly, there is a problem arising from the fact that Marx himself shunned the creation of abstract models as 'utopian'; there is a risk of a serious distortion if one imposes a 'model' on his work. Finally, there is the problem that later political events may be read into Marx's political theory (for example the events in the USSR, China and the development of the African one-party state).

revolution. This approach provides us with a basis from which to make comparisons with other socialist thought, including much of the so-called ‘contemporary’ literature.

Marx’s 1843 *Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right* (Marx 1994c) and 1845-46 *The German Ideology* (Marx & Engels 1989) provide us with his most substantial philosophical comments on democracy. Marx’s work at this time is self-consciously philosophical. In style, these critiques match the complexity and density of the works of Hegel and Feuerbach, who were the principal intellectual targets of Marx’s critique. It is important to note that neither work was published during his lifetime, meaning that if Marx’s contemporaries had relied on only his published material they would not have had the benefits of these early works. What emerges from these works, and other material developed during the early period of Marx’s career, are the three principles by which he understood ‘democracy’. These are, firstly, the difference between ‘true’ democracy and ‘formal’ or ‘abstract’ democracy as typified by liberal democracy. Secondly, these early works provide us with the conditions in which ‘true’ democracy may exist. Thirdly, as O’Malley argues, we find in these works Marx’s “idea of the character of institutions within true democracy” (O’Malley 1994: xx). These three principles are important in assisting us to interpret the meaning of Marx’s later political works on democracy, including, for example, his often quoted call in *The Manifesto of the Communist Party* to “raise the proletariat to the position of ruling class, to win the battle of democracy” (Marx & Engels 1950: 50).

What does Marx mean by ‘true democracy’? In order to find an answer to this question we must understand the context within which Marx wrote his early philosophical work on democracy. For most of the 1840s, Marx was more of a democrat than a socialist; however, by the end of the decade he was not only a socialist, but also a *communist*. Between 1842 and 1843 he contributed to, and edited, the democratic newspaper *Rheinische Zeitung* (Rhenish Gazette).

Following its suppression by the State in 1843, he moved to Paris to co-edit the *Deutsch-französische Jahrbücher* (German-French Yearbooks) with his friend Arnold Ruge. In 1844, the Yearbook included: Marx's *Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right: Introduction* (Marx 1994a); *On the Jewish Question* (Marx 1994d); and, *Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law: Introduction* (Marx 1844a). In the same year he also published *Critical Marginal Notes on "The King of Prussia and Social Reform. By a Prussian"* (Marx 1994b) in a radical Parisian newspaper. His largely German-focused critical activity led to his being expelled from Paris in 1845 at the request of the Prussian government. Thereafter, his philosophy and political activity became more radical.

Throughout the 1840s Marx found it consistently difficult to publish his written material. He failed to complete a two volume book contract on "The Critique of Politics and Political Economy", instead drafting *The German Ideology* which O'Malley describes as a "masterpiece of synthesis in which every one of Marx's earlier insights ... is preserved" (O'Malley 1994: xiv). This too failed to be published. Following his publishing failure with *The German Ideology*, we see a decided shift in Marx's work away from anti-Hegelian philosophy and political comment toward a focus on political economy. Marx had developed an interest in the latter during his time in Paris,¹⁹⁸ and it was to remain the mainstay of his life's work. It would be simplistic, however, to view his shift away from philosophy as a complete rejection of it. Rather, Marx's move is more of a gradual change in interest rather than a radical disjuncture. As will be demonstrated, the idea of democracy that Marx develops in his early work flows into his later, more economically focused, works.

¹⁹⁸ Marx's large corpus of notes from this period have been collected in the 1844 *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* (Marx 1844b); however, many Marx scholars reject the idea that these notes should be read as one complete or partially complete document (see O'Malley 1994: ix).

For some time in the late 1840s Marx continued his philosophically-sourced work in parallel with that derived from political economy. Shortly after the publication of *The Manifesto of the Communist Party* in London in 1848, Marx and his long-time benefactor Engels, established a newspaper in Cologne with the very illustrative title *Neue Rheinische Zeitung. Organ der Demokratie* (New Rhenish Gazette. Organ of Democracy). This paper, to which Marx contributed a number of articles,¹⁹⁹ was another attempt at a critical German-focused and pro-democratic publication, albeit in more revolutionary times.

Following the New Rhenish Gazette's suppression in May 1849, the economic turn in Marx's interest becomes more dominant. Yet another Rhenish Gazette was established, only this time the title and focus had shifted. The *Neue Rheinische Zeitung. Politisch-ökonomische Revue* (New Rhenish Gazette. Politico-economic Review) was published by Marx and Engels in Hamburg between December 1849 and November 1850.²⁰⁰ Marx's articles in this paper were posthumously published by Engels under the title *The Class Struggles in France 1848-1850* (Marx 1989d). Symbolically at least, the shift in newspaper titles represent the shift in the content of Marx's work, as democracy, whilst remaining important, becomes subsumed in a larger political economic critique of capitalism and contemporary politics.

I now turn to Marx's early philosophical excursions. The engagement with Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*²⁰¹ is crucial to our understanding of Marx's position

¹⁹⁹ For examples of the democratic nature of the political commentary see: Marx (1848) and Marx and Engels (1848).

²⁰⁰ For more details of Marx's early journalistic and philosophic career see: O'Malley (1994: vii-xxvii) and The Marx/Engels Archive: (<http://csf.Colorado.EDU/psn/marx/Archive/1848-RZ>) and (<http://csf.Colorado.EDU/psn/marx/Archive/1842-RZ>).

²⁰¹ Hegel (1967) - first published in 1821.

on democracy.²⁰² What concerns us here, is Hegel's theory of civil society and the appropriate form of the state. Marx's reaction to Hegel's theory underpins his notion of 'true' democracy. In his Addition to paragraph 182, Hegel argues that civil society is the area that lies between the family and the state (Hegel 1967: 266-267; 116A).²⁰³ Hegel believes that civil society is the sphere where particular persons, "concrete persons", pursue their "selfish ends" (Hegel 1967: 122-123; 182-183). In civil society there is created an environment of "complete interdependence, wherein the livelihood, happiness, and legal status of one man is interwoven with the livelihood, happiness, and rights of all" (Hegel 1967: 123; 183). Civil society, therefore, is the arena of collective selfishness, the:

territory of mediation, where there is free play for every idiosyncrasy, every talent, every accident of birth and fortune, and where waves of passion gush forth, regulated only by reason glinting through them (Hegel 1967: 267; 116A).

Civil society presupposes the *pre-existence* of the state as a separate and "self-subsistent" sphere (Hegel 1967: 266; 116A). This is a vital point worth reiterating, because it is a primary point on which Marx takes issue: for Hegel, the state has logical priority over civil society, as it is the state that calls civil society into being. The state in the equation is the independent variable, while civil society is wholly dependent for its existence on the state. For Hegel, the state is not merely 'government' as understood in liberal theory, it is the "actuality of the ethical Idea" (Hegel 1967: 155; 257). It is universal and "absolutely rational" (Hegel 1967: 155; 258).

²⁰² See further discussion in: Easton (1974 & 1981), Fischer (1981: 59-73), Krancberg (1982: 23-35), and Springborg (1984).

²⁰³ Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* is usually cited in terms of its paragraph numbers. Hegel usually provides a 'remark' attached to each numbered paragraph. By convention also, there are a number of 'additions' associated with paragraphs. These additions are taken from his lecture notes on this subject. Citations from Hegel's work in this thesis take the form: Author date: page; *one of*: paragraph number (ie 116); *or* remark to paragraph (ie 116r); *or* addition to paragraph (ie 116A).

In addition to the state having theoretical priority over civil society, it also has priority over the individual. Hegel argues that, contrary to the position taken by many liberals, the state does not exist to protect the individual's property and freedom, rather, the state *constitutes* the individual because it is "only as one of its members that the individual himself has objectivity, genuine individuality and an ethical life" (Hegel 1967: 156; 258r). Thus, he says it is "the supreme duty" of the individual "to be a member of the state" (Hegel 1967: 156; 258).

The only rational political structure of the modern state, in Hegel's thought, is a constitutional monarchy, in which the monarch holds the "power of absolute decision", and is "at once the apex and the basis of the whole" (Hegel 1967: 176; 273). Democracy, on the other hand, is inappropriate in the mature, modern world. Democracy was appropriate in its Ancient historical context of a simple united state, but not in a highly differentiated modern state (Hegel 1967: 176; 273r). Democracy, in Hegel's mind, cannot sustain the core "principle of the modern world", the "freedom of subjectivity" (Hegel 1967: 286; 165A).²⁰⁴

In addition to being incompatible with the modern state, Hegel argues that democracy is simply not practical. To ask which is better, democracy or monarchy, is according to Hegel, an empty question, because one option, democracy, is not an option at all (Hegel 1967: 286; 165A). The people, without a monarch, cannot form a state because they are a:

²⁰⁴ Hegel's notion of freedom is quite striking: 'freedom' arises from the individual being the subject of the universal, the state. True freedom arises from subjecting oneself to the state, that is, 'doing one's duty':

Duty is a restriction only on the self-will of subjectivity. It stands in the way only of that abstract good to which subjectivity adheres. When we say: 'We want to be free', the primary meaning of the words is simply: 'We want abstract freedom', and every institution and every organ of the state passes as a restriction on freedom of that kind. Thus duty is not a restriction on freedom, but only on freedom in the abstract, i.e. on unfreedom. Duty is the attainment of our essence, the winning of *positive* freedom (Hegel 1967: 259-260; 95A - original emphasis).

formless mass ... [lacking] every one of the determinate characteristics - sovereignty, government, judges, magistrates, class-divisions, &c., - which are to be found only in a whole which is inwardly organized (Hegel 1967: 183; 279r).

Even in “the beautiful democracy of Athens” leaders rose to the top and the people relied on “external phenomena” such as oracles to assist the making of judgements (Hegel 1967: 288; 170A). Further, Hegel notes in an aside that it is “a ridiculous notion” to expect that everyone would want to participate in the “business of the state” (Hegel 1967: 201; 308r). It would be far better to rely on the power of “public opinion” over the state, than to rely on democracy (Hegel 1967: 204; 316).

It is in his response to Hegel’s idealism and his reification of the state, that we find Marx’s fullest philosophical discussion of democracy. Marx systematically reverses much of what Hegel has to say, while retaining much of the Hegelian method.²⁰⁵ Frequently he states that Hegel is right, but for the wrong reasons (Springborg 1984: 541, 545).

“Ideologists”, Marx says in Chapter One of *The German Ideology*, “turn everything upside down” (Marx & Engels 1989: 83). Hegel, the ultimate ‘ideologist’, is guilty in Marx’s eyes of inverting the source and nature of the modern state:

What is simplest is made most complex and vice versa. What should be the point of departure becomes the mystical result, and what should be the rational result becomes the mystical point of departure (Marx 1994c: 23).

According to Marx, Hegel’s ‘mystification’ of the state and his theory of its priority over a separate, non-political civil society, is fundamentally flawed.

²⁰⁵ It is Engels rather than Marx who made famous the anti-Hegelian description of Marx’s methodology: ‘dialectical materialism’. Marx does, however, claim to be a materialist rather than an idealist (see Marx and Engels 1989) and he does follow the notion of dialectical change, namely, that each epoch produces from itself its own opposing and destructive force, which ultimately produces a synthetic overcoming of both opposing forces. The tag, then, is not entirely inappropriate.

Instead, Marx argues that it is this 'civil society' that calls the modern state into being and determines the form that it takes:

Civil society embraces the whole material intercourse of individuals within a definite stage of the development of productive forces. ... The term 'civil society' emerged in the eighteenth century, when property relations had already extricated themselves from the ancient and medieval community. Civil society as such only develops with the bourgeoisie; the social organisation evolving directly out of production and intercourse, which in all ages forms the basis of the state and of the rest of the idealistic superstructure, has, however, always been designated by the same name (Marx & Engels 1989: 79).

Thus, it follows that the characteristics of civil society, that is, the material relations of a society, determine the form of the state. If you change the material relations, you change the state. This is a vital step in Marx's rationale for treating the liberal state as a product of social relations, not some kind of independent and prior entity.

In rejecting the idealist theory of the state, Marx also rejects the Hegelian argument in favour of a constitutional monarchy. The monarch in Hegel's model is the apex of the universal, the state. Marx, not unsurprisingly, says that "what Hegel wants to do is represent the monarch as the actual God-man, the *actual incarnation* of the Idea [of the state]" (Marx 1994c: 5). If the state and, therefore, the monarch are not pre-eminent over civil society but subordinate to it, then it follows that Hegel's preference for constitutional monarchy and the disallowance of democracy has no foundation. Monarchy and democracy are both forms of the state; however, Marx argues that one of them, namely monarchy, rests on a fiction (Marx 1994c: 8). The fiction is located in the source of sovereignty. Hegel says that the sovereign exists by the assertion of his will (Hegel 1967: 288; 170A). Marx argues that the sovereignty of the monarch "does not derive from him, but he from it" (Marx 1994c: 7).

The people, for Marx, are the source of sovereignty. It is with this that he turns to outline his notion of democracy as the true expression of this sovereignty. By this Marx is referring to his belief that rather than monarchy being the only

appropriate form of the modern state, it is in fact an ‘adulterated’ *particular* form of the generic form. And what is this generic form? The answer is democracy. Monarchy is merely a “sub-species” of democracy (Marx 1994c: 8). Marx turns to a religious analogy to make this point very clearly:

in a certain respect democracy is to all other forms of state what Christianity is to all other religions. ... Relative to democracy all other forms of the state are its Old Testament (Marx 1994c: 9).

In a crucial passage in the *Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right* Marx outlines what he means by democracy as the generic expression of sovereignty. In so doing, he distinguishes ‘true’ democracy from mere ‘formal’ democracy. He does this by means of a critique of the Hegelian, and by implication, liberal separation of the ‘political’ state in all its forms from the ‘non-political’ civil society. In both Hegelian and liberal thought the form that civil society takes does not determine the form taken by the state. Indeed, as we have seen, Hegel argues the opposite, and liberal civil society, as Macpherson argues, has existed in a number of political systems (Macpherson 1972: 6).

For Marx, the separation of the state and civil society cuts the realm of ‘true’ democracy in half. By democracy, Marx means the “self-determination of the people. In monarchy we have the people of the constitution, in democracy the constitution of the people. ... [Democracy is] the people’s *own* work. ... [D]emocracy starts with man and makes the state objectified man” (Marx 1994c: 8-9 - original emphasis). In both Hegelian constitutional monarchy and liberal democracy “political man has his particular and separate existence alongside unpolitical, private man. Property, contract, marriage, civil society, appear here ... to be the *content* to which the *political state* relates as the *organising form*” (Marx 1994c: 9 - original emphasis). According to Marx, however, this appearance of the separate political state as organising civil society is an illusion. In monarchy or liberal democracy, the political state “dominates without actually governing, i.e. [without] materially permeating the content of the remaining non-

political spheres” (Marx 1994c: 10). Having rejected the restriction of politics to the abstract state, Marx deems it dependent to the form taken by civil society. ‘True’ democracy, as the political expression of civil society, means that the separate political state ‘disappears’ as a thing in itself: “it [democracy] ceases to be a *mere political* constitution” (Marx 1994c: 10 - original emphasis) separate from the constitution of civil society.

‘True’ democracy for Marx, then, is the self-determination of the people. It begins with civil society, and is not merely a form of the state. By contrast, the liberal model of democracy merely democratizes the sphere of formal politics. It shields the ‘non-political’ sphere of civil society from democracy. Marx argues that the primary function of the contemporary liberal state is the protection of private property. Liberal democracy shields property relations from democratic control.²⁰⁶ The division of interests between the particular and general in the political theory of liberal democracy is merely a way of abstracting the particular interests of one class and presenting them, through the state, as the general interest. Marx explains that: “the ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas i.e., the class which is the ruling *material* force of society is at the same time its ruling *intellectual* force” (Marx & Engels 1989: 49 - original emphasis). Further:

it follows that every class which is aiming at domination ... must first conquer political power in order to represent its interest in turn as the general interest. ... [In bourgeois democracy, however] the *practical* struggle of these particular interests, which *actually* constantly run counter to the common and illusory common interests, necessitates *practical* intervention and restraint by the illusory “general” interest in the form of the state (Marx & Engels 1989: 36 - original emphasis).

‘True’ democratic participation involves the “drive of civil society to transform itself into *political* society ... to make *political* society and *actual* [civil] society

²⁰⁶ This is of course a theme prominent in later writings by Marx and his adherents.

one and the same ... [by] the fullest possible *universal* participation in legislative power” (Marx 1994c: 26 - original emphasis).

One must not assume that Marx rejects outright the institutions of liberal, ‘formal’ or ‘bourgeois’ democracy. His point is that they do not go far enough. Marx argues for the continual advancement of formal democracy and for its final overcoming:

[p]olitical emancipation is sure to be a great advance, but it is certainly not the final form of human emancipation in general. Rather, it is the final form of human emancipation *within* the previous order of things (Marx 1994d: 37 - original emphasis).

In the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* of June 13 1848, he noted that in revolutionary Prussia:

the people was [sic] victorious; it had won liberties of a pronounced democratic nature but direct control passed into the hands of the big bourgeoisie and not into those of the people. In short, the revolution was not carried through to the end (Marx & Engels 1848).

Marx later argued in greater detail that the same thing occurred in France in the *Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*.²⁰⁷

The key to Marx’s notion of democracy is the suffrage. The most potent source of liberal democracy’s claim to the title ‘democracy’ is the vote. Competitive elite theories of democracy, which would have to be the most minimal theoretical expression of the rule by the *demos*, pin their claim to the democratic mantle on the existence of the suffrage. Marx also thinks that the suffrage is the key to ‘true’ democracy, as well as to ‘formal’ democracy. The extension of the suffrage in liberal democracies is vital, because, by definition, it implies the extension of whatever limited freedoms liberal democracy may provide to the working class - liberal democracy is better than no democracy at all, even if it is largely illusory (Marx & Engels 1989: 68-69). In addition, the

²⁰⁷ Marx (1989e) - first published in 1852.

extension of the suffrage has distinct revolutionary potential. The extension of the suffrage elevates all members of civil society to the level of political society. Voting overcomes the gap between the interests of the bourgeois state, and the real interests of civil society. The “*vote* is the *immediate, direct*, existing and not *simply imagined* relation of civil society to the political state. It therefore goes without saying that the *vote* is the chief political interest of actual civil society” (Marx 1994c: 27 - original emphasis).

The revolutionary potential of the suffrage lies in its potential to translate the interests of civil society into the actions of the abstract political state. When achieved, the rationale for the distinction between the two dissolves. The abstract state has no reason for existence because it was only ever the formal political expression of civil society’s political interest. Civil society as a distinct entity has no rationale for a continued existence, because it was only ever established as an idea, in order to maintain the separate existence of the abstract state (Marx 1994c: 27). The consequence of the collapse of the civil society/state distinction is to extend to the economic relations of civil society the democratic control that had previously been contained within the formal political sphere of the state. Marx rejects Hegel’s quip that people ordinarily would not be interested in making direct decisions about the business of the state, arguing instead that people have an interest in ‘proving’ their political existence:

To participate in the legislature is thus to participate in the political state and to prove and actualise one’s existence as *member of the political state*, as *member of the state*. That *all as individuals* want to participate integrally in the legislature is nothing but the will *of all* to be actual (active) members of the state, or to give themselves a *political existence*, or to prove their existence as *political* and to effect it as such (Marx 1994c: 26 - original emphasis).

The failed democratic revolutions of 1848, however, showed Marx that the theory of the revolutionary potential of democracy has one major weakness. The theory that the exercise of the democratic suffrage alone will dissolve the distinction between state and civil society relies on members of civil society apprehending their ‘real’ political interests and translating them into action via

their votes. In 1848, Marx found that this did not happen. The problem, as he saw it, was that the ruling class in any stage of social development sets the parameters by which the community's general interest can be conceived. In capitalist society, the interests of the vast majority of the people do not coincide with the interests of the capitalist class. The dominant illusory 'general' interest, the interest of capital, masks the 'real' general interest. The franchise alone will not strip away this mask.

Marx was faced with two challenges: firstly, to identify those members of society whose interests are not in line with the illusory general interest and, secondly, to develop a way of demonstrating this fact. In his *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law*, Marx rhetorically poses this challenge and supplies the answer. What is needed, he says, is:

the formation of a class with radical chains, a class of civil society which is not a class of civil society, an estate which is the dissolution of all estates, a sphere which has a universal character by its universal suffering and claims no particular right because no particular wrong but wrong generally is perpetrated against it; ... [this class] cannot emancipate itself without emancipating itself from all other spheres of society and thereby emancipating all other spheres of society, which, in a word, is the complete loss of man and hence can win itself only through the complete winning of man. This dissolution of society as a particular estate is the proletariat (Marx 1844a).

In the proletariat Marx finds his vehicle for revolutionary change as well as a class that both deserves this change and will be the ultimate beneficiary of it. The proletariat and their movement, communism, represent the overcoming of class-based society. Communism is the class-based revolutionary successor, in Marx's thought, to his early generalised faith in the revolutionary potential of democracy.²⁰⁸ After the disillusioning events of 1848, the meaning and institutions of democracy remain the same in Marx's theory of communism, but its priority is now much lower, as we will see below.

²⁰⁸ See further: Debrizzi (1982), De George (1981), and Houghton (1996).

Communism is the product of “the community of revolutionary proletarians” which embodies the “conditions of the free development and movement of individuals” (Marx & Engels 1989: 70). Right from the start democracy is paired with, but subordinate to, the realisation of communism. In 1848 Engels links his notion of communism with democracy in his *Principles of Communism* (Engels 1989: 94). Marx extends this in *The Manifesto of the Communist Party* in which, after linking democracy to the idea of the proletariat assuming the position of ruling class, he follows Engels in listing what are primarily a series of economic demands aimed at wresting economic control from the hands of the bourgeoisie (Marx & Engels 1950: 50-51). From this point on in Marx’s work, the realisation of democracy requires the revolutionary transformation of the mode of production - hence, democracy *follows* socialism.

Following *The German Ideology* there is a shift in the way in which Marx discusses democracy in socialism and communism. Marx’s primary focus becomes an analysis of the capitalist economic form and an ongoing engagement with contemporary politics, principally through the organs of revolutionary societies. Following 1848, these societies were primarily: the Communist League²⁰⁹ and, later, the International Working Men’s Association (IWMA- the First International).

Marx’s analyses of capitalism do not concern us greatly, except that they give flesh to his earlier assertion that civil society drives the form of the state and not vice versa. Civil society, in turn, is driven by the mode of production, which he argues ultimately drives human history.²¹⁰ Marx sums up this view well in his

²⁰⁹ It should be noted that the “Communist League” was basically a figment in Marx’ and Engels’ collective imagination when it published ‘its’ first and only great work, *The Manifesto of the Communist Party*.

²¹⁰ Hence the famous claim in *The Manifesto of the Communist Party* that “the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles” (Marx & Engels 1950: 33).

somewhat lengthy 'Preface' to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*:²¹¹

The general conclusion at which I arrived and which, once reached, became the guiding principle of my studies can be summarised as follows. In the social production of their existence, men inevitably enter into definite relations, which are independent of their will, namely relations of production appropriate to a given stage in the development of their material forces of production. The totality of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which arises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions the general process of social, political and intellectual life. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness. At a certain stage of development, the material productive forces of society come into conflict with the existing relations of production or - this merely expresses the same thing in legal terms - with the property relations within the framework of which they have operated hitherto. From forms of development of the productive forces these relations turn into their fetters. Then begins an era of social revolution. The changes in the economic foundation lead sooner or later to the transformation of the whole immense superstructure. In studying such transformations it is always necessary to distinguish between the material transformation of the economic condition of production, which can be determined with the precision of natural science, and the legal, political, religious, artistic or philosophic - in short, ideological forms in which men become conscious of this conflict and fight it out. Just as one does not judge an individual by what he thinks about himself, so one cannot judge such a period of transformation by its consciousness, but, on the contrary, this consciousness must be explained from the contradictions of material life, from the conflict existing between the social forces of production and the relations of production. No social formation is ever destroyed before all the productive forces for which it is sufficient have been developed, and new superior relations of production never replace older ones before the material conditions for their existence have matured within the framework of the old society. Mankind thus inevitably sets itself only such tasks as it is able to solve, since closer examination will always show that the problem itself arises only when the material conditions for its solution are already present or at least in the course of formation. In broad outline, the Asiatic, ancient, feudal and modern bourgeois modes of production may be designated as epochs marking progress in the economic development of society. The bourgeois relations of production are the last antagonistic form of the social process of production - antagonistic not in the sense of individual antagonism but of an antagonism that emanates from the individual's social conditions of existence - but the productive forces developing within bourgeois society create also the material conditions for a solution of this antagonism. The prehistory of human society accordingly closes with this social formation (Marx 1989c: 521-522).

Capitalism, and indeed all preceding modes of production, Marx contends, contains the seeds of its own destruction. Changes in the mode of production, the economic base, drive changes in the legal, political, religious, artistic or

²¹¹ Marx (1989c) - first published in 1859.

philosophic ‘superstructure’. As the above quotation illustrates, Marx believes that each mode of production generates “contradictions of material life”, as the “productive forces” (in capitalism, the proletariat) increasingly come into conflict with the “relations of production” (the basic capitalist system of property relations). Ultimately the conflict will lead to an overcoming of the antagonism between productive forces and the relations of production: a revolution. Two issues are immediately relevant here. Firstly, one can see why liberal democracy, which seeks to contain democratic action to a sphere separate from economic relations, is dismissed as mere ‘formal’ democracy. Liberal democracy, in this view, quarantines the relations of production from control by the productive forces of society, that is, the proletariat.

Secondly, as the above quotation indicates, Marx argues that while change in society is driven by contradictions in its economic base, these contradictions are ‘played out’ in conflicts in the superstructure, such as political conflicts. Political conflict reflects revolutionary pressures in the mode of production. However, while Marx remained supremely confident of the inevitability of the transformation of capitalism to communism, he remained concerned that the capitalist state would seek to hold back and mask the development of contradictions.²¹² This explains his active involvement in political issues of the day and why, rather than just relying on the inevitability of the collapse of capitalism under its own contradictions, he actively supported the Communards in Paris in 1871 despite his misgivings about the appropriateness of the timing of their insurrection.²¹³

²¹² See *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (Marx 1989e: 452 and 481).

²¹³ In the second Address by the IWMA on the Franco-Prussian War, Marx presciently warned that any insurrection aimed at “upsetting the new Government [ie the Republic] when the enemy [the Prussian army] is knocking at the doors of Paris, would be a desperate folly” (Marx 1950: 451). Indeed, at that stage, he urged the French working class to support and take advantage of the liberties that a Republic would bring to their cause, and he signed off with “Vive la République!” (Marx 1950: 451-452).

Marx's writings on the Paris Commune of 1871 have usually been published as the third and final in a series of Addresses by the IWMA on the events in France of 1870-71. The first two Addresses concerned the Franco-Prussian War in which Louis Bonaparte's aspirations at Empire were crushed. As we have seen, the Third Address "On the Civil War in France, 1871"²¹⁴ has been used by some historians of democratic theory as a possible 'model' for what Marx may have had in mind for a communist society. This claim, however, is dubious, given Marx's refusal to specify models for future communist society. For Marx, the form taken by socialism and communism will be determined by the circumstances in which it arises, not in accordance with some pre-ordained plan. Indeed, Marx derided such Utopian socialist modelling as "ovine" and "sentimental" (Marx 1989b: 545).²¹⁵ Nevertheless, this last Address, in combination with the 1876 *Critique of the Gotha Programme* (Marx 1996), remains a useful indicator of the *kinds* of social and political arrangements *approved* of by Marx. Importantly, these later political works confirm that Marx retained many of the views contained in his early philosophical work on democracy.

The Commune, Marx tells us, superseded not only the "monarchical form of class rule, but class-rule itself" (Marx 1950: 470). This statement resonates with his notion of communism as that stage in which, following the socialist revolution and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat, all classes are 'abolished' and a "classless society" established (Marx 1989a: 547). That Marx considered the Commune to be democratic *and* communist is evident in the following passage from *The Civil War in France*:

The Commune was formed of the municipal councillors, chosen by universal suffrage in the various wards of the town, responsible and revocable at short terms. The majority of its members were naturally working men, or acknowledged representatives of the working class.

²¹⁴ Hereafter: *The Civil War in France*.

²¹⁵ See also Crocker (1981: 32-35).

The Commune was to be a working, not a parliamentary, body, executive and legislative at the same time. ... Not only municipal administration, but the whole initiative hitherto exercised by the State was laid into the hands of the Commune (Marx 1950: 471).

The police and bureaucrats were to be “revocable agents of the Commune.” Magistrates, judges and other public officials were to be “elective, responsible, and revocable” (Marx 1950: 471). The Commune was, Marx writes, to be a model for the whole of France. The few remaining centrally required functions would be performed by regional delegates meeting in a National Delegation (Marx 1950: 471-472). The old ‘parasitic’ state would, therefore, be replaced and:

Instead of deciding once in every three or six years which member of the ruling class was to misrepresent the people in Parliament, universal suffrage was to serve the people, constituted in Communes, as individual suffrage serves every other employer in the search for the workmen and managers in his business. ... Nothing could be more foreign to the spirit of the Commune than to supersede universal suffrage by hierarchic investiture (Marx 1950: 472).

The key re-occurring theme in these passages is the power of the suffrage and representative institutions for the self-governing of the Commune and of France. Marx is perfectly comfortable with the idea of representative bodies constituting the key institutional structures of democracy, but not with the limited choice of liberal democratic systems. In a parallel move with James Mill, representatives are to be constantly on notice; however, the Commune took this further by proposing the facility for immediate recall of representatives. Marx clearly approves of extending this principle to all public positions, and for collapsing once and for all the distinction between the Legislative, Executive and Judiciary, which shields large segments of the state apparatus from direct democratic control. This approach led to ‘cheap government’, a result strengthened by the abolition of the standing army and the payment of officials at levels equivalent to workmen’s wages. Such were the conditions that Marx saw the Commune providing for the “basis of really democratic institutions” (Marx 1950: 473).

At the same time as lauding the Commune's 'real', or to use his earlier phrase, 'true', democratic credentials, Marx insists that such institutions were dependent upon an economic revolution. The 'expansive' nature of the Commune, when compared with the "repressive" nature of "all previous forms of government" reveals a secret: that the Commune:

was essentially a working-class government, the product of the struggle of the producing against the appropriating class, the political form at last discovered under which to work out the economic emancipation of labour ... With labour emancipated, every man becomes a working man, and productive labour ceases to be a class attribute (Marx 1950: 473-474).

The Commune was trying to make "individual property a truth by transforming the means of production, land and capital, now chiefly the means of enslaving and exploiting labour, into mere instruments of free and associated labour- But this is Communism, [the so-called] 'impossible' Communism!" (Marx 1950: 474).

The structure of the Commune, as reported by Marx,²¹⁶ was democratic in Marx's own terms, but its initial purpose and policies were communist.²¹⁷ The purpose was the 'emancipation of labour', a phrase that Marx increasingly defined as the goal of Communism. Ultimately, of course, the Commune was crushed, but Marx remained convinced of the rightness of its motivation (H: 1879).

We see in *The Civil War in France*, a powerful restatement of Marx's early notions of democracy, and its principal tool, the suffrage, combined with his later focus on such potentially revolutionary institutions as expressions of a deeper revolution in the economic basis of society. The latter is crucial to Marx's politics, when compared with other forms of socialist thought. For example, in

²¹⁶ Of course, one must ultimately be cautious about the reliability of Marx's descriptions. Carver argues that it is best to view Marx's writings on the Commune as a "meditation on what he took to be the principles that emerge in democratic politics, and his 'ideal' institutions to be reasonable extrapolations that the Commune was never able to realise" (Carver 1996: xviii).

²¹⁷ Marx wrote approvingly of the Commune's social reform measures as "its own working existence. Its special measures could but betoken the tendency of a government of the people, by the people." The measures included: the abolition of night work, the protection of wages, and the appropriation and re-opening of workshops closed by their owners (Marx 1950: 478).

the *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, Marx is contemptuous of Lassallean social democracy. The Gotha Programme, amongst other things, calls for the extension of democratic control into state agencies and activities (Marx 1996: 220). Marx rejects such a notion because it places democracy before the dissolution of capitalism and the capitalist state. ‘True’ Democracy, that is, rule by the people, cannot exist in capitalism because it is capital that rules: “the working people who put these demands [the Gotha Programme] to the state [are] in full knowledge that they neither rule nor are ready to” (Marx 1996: 220). Instead of breaking with capitalism, Marx contends that these social democrats are too sanguine about the state and that their demands “are nothing but the democratic litany well known the world over: the universal manhood suffrage, legislative initiative, civil rights, citizen militias, etc” (Marx 1996: 222). These demands, however, had already been met in a number of countries (although Marx concedes not in Germany) without there being any undermining of capitalism. Democratic control of government will not of itself change the state. As a consequence, he argues that “despite the ring of democracy about it, the whole Programme is infested through and through with ... [a] servile belief in the state, or what is no better, by a faith in miracles of democracy” (Marx 1996: 224).²¹⁸

It is at this point that I conclude my examination of Marx’s theory of democracy. We have covered Marx’s definition of ‘true’ democracy, the conditions in which it will arise, and the institutions through which it may operate. Democracy in Marx’s overall thought is not necessarily of itself the kind of radical revolutionary tool one might expect. It certainly does not mean anarchy, nor necessarily ‘direct’ soviet-style institutions.²¹⁹ The latter may be possible if appropriate to the circumstances, but Marx’s own vision of socialist

²¹⁸ It is for this reason that Marx rejects the notion of the state providing education itself, although he does concede it may have a role in setting educational standards.

²¹⁹ On this see Harding (1977).

democracy was very much in line with the “democratic litany” he had criticised in the *Critique of the Gotha Programme*. Marx’s notion of the institutions of democracy remains quite conventional by modern standards throughout his work. Even in his commentary on the ‘radical’ Paris Commune he argues that the key democratic feature was its representative institutions. The universal suffrage was the means by which democracy was realised. The addition of some ‘direct democracy’ devices such as the direct election and recall of officials is also hardly a radical turn. As noted in the previous chapter, these have been a feature of some republican and liberal models of government for a considerable period.

What makes Marx’s representative democracy radical is that it he see it as following the realisation of an economic revolution. It is only with the change in ideology from capitalism to communism frees workers to vote democratically, in the full knowledge of their ‘real’ interests. As we saw above, the consciousness of the voter is ‘determined’ by the relations of production. Thus, what mattered for Marx was the realisation, by revolution, of socialism. He could entertain a conventional, even liberal, notion of representative democracy because it would follow the deeper revolution in the relations of production. In this, we have reached the classic socialist dilemma: reform or revolution? In particular, we have in the examples of *The Civil War in France* and the *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, claims to ‘democracy’ that in content are remarkably similar but whose erstwhile value is at polar opposites because of the question of priority. In the former, democracy follows the socialist revolution; in the latter, Marx argues, the achievement of democracy is sought before the achievement of socialism and, therefore, neither will be truly realised.

The question arises, then, as to the place of democracy in socialist theory. Is it an independent value, or is it an extension of other values? Marx began his career in the former position but by the end was of the other persuasion. As we will see below, other socialists, such as those that wrote the Gotha Programme, clearly

were not so sure. Democracy for them was worth pursuing in its own right as it may be a vehicle for transforming the state to socialism. The realisation of democracy, they argue, may lead to the realisation of socialism.

The reason why it is important to distinguish the relative priority democracy holds in socialist thought is that it radically affects the way particular theorists approach, or would approach, the issue of realising democracy. Marx's prioritisation of socialism over democracy carries with it a simple deferral of theorising the realisation of democracy, and subordinates it to the abolition of capitalism. For Marx, bourgeois, republican or liberal democracy, rests on a series of illusions. The major illusion is that democracy of itself lets the people rule. Marx's premise is that the capitalist state will act to defend capitalism against democracy. In this scheme, republican virtue upholds the big illusion by the use of a smaller one: namely, that self-control by the mass of the people is in the general interest.²²⁰ Liberal democratic theory, with its avoidance of virtue and reliance on institutional design, is at least more 'up-front' about the purpose of this exercise: to contain democracy within the sphere of politics. The control of the effects of democracy is really in the interest only of those for whom the stability of the State and the containment of politics is of greatest interest- the bourgeoisie. Republican self-control and the liberal institutional containment of democracy are the product of bourgeois *ideology*.

The republican/liberal 'problem' of realising democracy is really only a problem if democracy genuinely results in the 'rule of the people', *and* that the people know what their 'real', revolutionary, interests are. Instability is a bourgeois fear, or in the case of early republican theory, it is a more generalised fear of 'the mob'. It is not a big step to take to recognise that in arguing that

²²⁰ This is not to say that Marx's thought cannot be seen as possessing an ethical content, but that its 'ethics' are counter to bourgeois and republican morality. See Crocker (1981), De George (1981), Denyer (1989), Elster (1986), Geras (1994), Hodges (1969-1970), and Levine (1984).

'true' democracy can only arise after the realisation of socialism, Marx simply bypasses the whole problem of 'realising' democracy. The 'problem' is one produced by class conflict inherent in the capitalist mode of production and its political forms, such as 'bourgeois' democracy. In a classless society the whole 'problem' does not arise. Marx and his adherents, therefore, have *defined away* the realisation of democracy, *as a problem*.

Social democratic theory: sidestepping the issue

As we are discovering, the relative priority given by socialists to democracy is an important indicator of the way in which they approach its realisation. At the outset of this chapter it was suggested that socialist theories of democracy fall on a continuum when it comes to the priority given to democracy relative to socialism. Marx, as we have seen, began his political career convinced that democracy was sufficient in itself to realise the transformation of society. However, in giving the realisation of democracy a low priority, relative to the realisation of socialism, the later Marx can be positioned at one end of the continuum mentioned above. Many socialists, however, give democracy a higher relative priority. In the theories of many socialists, such as those that wrote the Gotha Programme, democracy assumes both the status of the political form taken by the end state of socialism, and as also the means of achieving it. Democracy has, by definition, a high relative priority and its meaning must be, to a certain extent, independent of the realisation of socialism.

This section of the chapter briefly looks at those theorists, who will be termed 'social democrats', that see democracy as both the means of achieving socialism and as part of the definition of socialism. Social democrats retain Marx's view that the existing institutions of liberal democratic societies are *democratic*. As we will see, however, some such as Bernstein and the 'Eurocommunists', seek to augment liberal democratic institutions with more localised political structures. Social democrats, it will be noted, cannot approach the issue of realising

democracy by deferring it until after the revolution. In addition, they cannot define away the realisation of democracy as a problem, by blaming capitalism for making it a problem. Instead, social democrats, like many liberal democrats, tend merely to avoid theorising the realisation of democracy in the first place. They do this by simply accepting that it has been realised in liberal democratic societies. Instead of deferring theorising the realisation of democracy, therefore, social democrats sidestep it.

A principal problem for socialists in general is how to view the ‘democracy’ of liberal democratic societies. Is it truly democracy, or merely a pale shadow of the real thing? Is it a neutral instrument as capable of transforming capitalism as it is of legitimising the status quo? The challenge for social democrats is that the more one accepts liberal democratic institutions as legitimately democratic, the more one is drawn into the containment strategies underpinning them. Conversely, the more one rejects the democratic claim of such institutions, the more one stands open to the criticism of merely redefining democracy to suit one’s ends, that is, of subordinating democracy to some other value.

Although social democracy has a longer history than ‘Marxism’ (Keman 1993: 292-293), it has been most prominent in the West in the twentieth century. Social democratic thought was given great impetus by the unfortunate examples of the repressive regimes in Eastern Europe that claimed to follow Marx’s revolutionary path. King and Wickham-Jones argue that social democrats share three features:

first, an attachment to the existing institutions of capitalist society (notably parliament); second, an attempt to seek electoral support from a coalition of classes and not from workers alone; and last, a commitment to the introduction of gradual reforms rather than to an immediate transformation of society (King and Wickham-Jones 1995: 200).

There have been many versions of the social democratic form. All share a commitment to both democracy and socialism. Their differences over the meaning of socialism do not concern us here; rather, our interest turns on the meaning given to democracy and, consequently, the way they understand its

realisation. Politically, social democrats have been visible by the activities of their political parties. By participating within the electoral contest of liberal democratic societies, they have, in practice, underscored the democratic claims of liberal democratic institutions. They have also been successful in ameliorating many of the socially destructive elements of capitalism, through the operations of the welfare state. The vital point, however, as Cunningham notes, is that social democratic parties aim “to promote egalitarian measures, but not beyond what can be accommodated within a capitalist economy (albeit uncomfortably)” (Cunningham 1987: 284). The ‘top-down’, centralised, party-driven nature of the social democratic model seems hardly distinct from the traditional functions of the liberal democratic party system. Przeworski for example, dismisses social democratic parties as “integrated into” the capitalist liberal democratic state; they are in fact unable to achieve socialism because they have to sacrifice radicalism to achieve electoral success, and they ultimately cannot do anything too radical when in government because of their dependence on the capitalist economy (Przeworski 1991).²²¹

In practice, then, the ‘democracy’ of social democratic parties is compatible with the liberal competitive system, even if it is perhaps enhanced with greater internal party democracy than normal. Social democracy is, by definition, contained within the realm of liberal political institutions, even if its historical activities in establishing the welfare state have had a profound effect on the way capitalist ‘non-political’ civil society operates.

In theory, however, many social democratic thinkers, such as Bernstein, have argued that neither the revolutionary nor pragmatic centrist party-driven model

²²¹ See King and Wickham-Jones (1995: 200-201), Cunningham (1987: 284-285), and Beilharz (1990). Less committed to the purely electoral road to socialism is the broad spectrum of thinkers who reject the ‘reform or revolution’ dichotomy. These theorists have argued in recent times for a “third way” to socialism. On the ‘third way’ see Machin (1983).

was likely to achieve socialism.²²² Bernstein, Paul Hirst writes, was one of Marx and Engels “brightest disciples”, who in the course of his work became “a political leper because he had exposed the political illusions of both parliamentary and insurrectionary socialists” (Hirst 1990b: 85). The irony for Hirst is that Bernstein was correct on both counts. Writing around the turn of the century, Bernstein accurately predicted that in the advanced European countries, socialist political parties would never be able to command an immense and secure electoral majority. The effect of this was that those socialists committed to the electoral path of overcoming capitalism would inevitably be forced to sacrifice their ends on the altar of electoral expediency. So too, the absence of a huge proletarian majority meant that revolutionary or ‘insurrectionary’ socialists would always be vulnerable to effective suppression by the state (Hirst 1990b: 84).²²³

In rejecting both the party-driven electoral route to socialism and the revolutionary path, Bernstein plotted a course between Lassalle’s belief in achieving socialism through the ‘capture’ of the state by the workers, and the Marx/Lenin view of socialism achieved against the state. Bernstein’s route to socialism was both gradual and democratic. Class rule would be overcome, but classes would still exist, as would the private economy where it was most efficient. Gay quotes Bernstein as saying that socialism is “the legitimate heir” to liberalism rather than its destroyer (Gay 1952: 241). Consistent with this view is the notion of democracy employed by Bernstein. The key to Bernstein’s social democracy is the suffrage. Bernstein regards the democracy that will imperceptibly transform capitalism to socialism in terms with which we are now familiar: representative institutions and parliamentary control over the institutions of the state (Gay 1952: 240). Bernstein rejects as utopian both the idea of direct

²²² See Moss (1985).

²²³ See also Gay (1952: 241).

democracy and any notion that the state might disappear (Gay 1952: 243). Where Bernstein differs from the liberal model of democracy is in arguing that power must increasingly be dispersed into self-governing municipalities. Local self-government, therefore, provides a means by which the power of the central authorities may be resisted (Gay 1952: 240). Liberalism, as we have seen, seeks to contain democracy. Bernstein wants to *multiply* it by the increasing use of liberal institutional forms of democracy at more local levels. We see strong echoes of this approach in the anti-bureaucratic, anti-statist work of Markovi'c, as well as in recent attempts to incorporate pluralist elements into social democracy, such as 'Eurocommunism'.²²⁴

In a sense, all that separates Bernstein from liberal democrats is Bernstein's faith that no matter how long it takes, the end result of the extension of the franchise will be socialism. For Bernstein this is not something to be feared, and he looks to liberal democratic institutions as instruments of positive, peaceful change. The practice of democracy will teach both the majority to support socialism and the minority to acquiesce in its inevitability (Gay 1952: 239 & 241). The realisation of democracy in Bernstein's theory, therefore, is reminiscent of John Stuart Mill.²²⁵ Liberal democracy *is* democracy, and involvement in democracy will educate the participants about the way liberal democratic institutions can operate successfully.

As we move further across the spectrum of the social democratic movement we find an increasing interest in the devolution of democratic practice. Bernstein argued for the multiplication of the sites of liberal democracy and its institutions. Arguably, however, this involves the replication, albeit on a smaller scale, of the

²²⁴ See Markovi'c (1982 esp: 168-210); also Crocker (1983).

²²⁵ On JS Mill and socialism, see: Hughes (1972).

liberal democratic separation of politics from civil society. Politics and democracy are confined to the sphere of government, and of representative institutions. The move toward multiplying the sites of democracy has, however, been influential, and finds fresh expression in much of the more recent socialist theorising of democracy. We find an example of this in 'Eurocommunism', which Cunningham describes as a socialist variant on liberal pluralist theory (Cunningham 1987).

Eurocommunism, which was most influential in Europe in the 1970s, essentially sought to combine the growing influence of the grass-roots politics of social-movements²²⁶ with more traditional social democratic parliamentarianism. Eurocommunism sought "to achieve the transformation of capitalist society in socialist directions by constitutional means, inside the constitutional and legal framework provided by bourgeois democracy" but not purely through traditional party politics (Miliband 1978: 159).²²⁷ The marriage between social democratic parties and new social movements was awkward, as the open and fluid structure required by the latter often conflicted with the realities of the liberal electoral system, which demanded rigidity and discipline from political parties.

How can we describe Eurocommunism as socialist pluralism? Such a claim would indeed be problematic if we were to include the transformative intention of

²²⁶ Touraine defines social movements as having several fundamental characteristics:

1) as socially conflictual behaviours [as well as] *culturally oriented* forms of behavior, and not as the manifestation of the objective contradictions of a system of domination ... 2) the action of social movements is not fundamentally directed towards the state and cannot be identified with political action for the conquest of power. It is *class* action, directed against a truly social adversary ... 3) [it] is not the creator of a more modern or advanced society than the one it is fighting; within a given cultural and historical field, it is defending another society (Touraine 1978: 80).

See further: Lawson and Merkl (1988) and Touraine (1977).

²²⁷ On Eurocommunism see also: Carrillo (1977), Machin (1983b), and McLellan (1983).

such theories, that is, the intention to transform capitalism to socialism. The claim is, however, more sound when we consider how ‘democracy’ is understood in such theories. In 1977, the French Communist Party argued that its position on democracy and socialism was “peaceful, democratic, [and] pluralist”:

One of the fundamental tasks of [the envisaged democratically elected socialist] power will be precisely to respect and to make respected the freely expressed will of the majority of the people. ... But let it be well understood that it will be able to do this just insofar as, far from substituting its intervention [against reaction] for that of the people thus relegating them to passivity and disorganisation, it always bases itself on them (Fabre, Hincker and Sève quoted in Cunningham 1987: 356 11n).

In swapping the purely party-driven social democratic model and the revolutionary communist approach for a more pluralist model, the Eurocommunist approach required a change in the way in which democracy was understood. Democracy was much more than merely the separate realm of formal politics, it was devolved to the level of the relations between the social movements to which individuals belong. The key here is that ‘democracy’ has been re-connected with *society*. As Cunningham notes, however, while it does appear that “mobilising people with various priorities around a shared anticapitalist, democracy-enhancing political project is the way to go” (Cunningham 1987: 277) the motivation of the Eurocommunists remains suspect. All this additional ‘democracy’ was to serve the end of getting the party to succeed electorally. Social movements had an ‘instrumental’ function in mobilising support for the party. The role of *social* democracy, that is, the democracy of social movements, was to reinforce formal democracy, as it were. This is, of course, little different from the liberal theories of pluralism we saw in the previous chapter.

As noted at the outset of this section, the social democratic position, be it purely electorally motivated or augmented by more local sites of democratic behaviour, is united by the belief that liberal democratic structures are *democratic*, and may be used to realise socialism. We do not find much in the way of

theorisation of the realisation of democracy in social democratic theory. Instead, it appears that it is assumed that democracy has been realised, and that perhaps all that may be required is a bit of 'tweaking' of it, to enhance its socially transformative capacity. Whether it is valid to assume that democracy has been realised is not at issue here. What is important, however, is to note the consequences of this assumption.

Social democrats, in accepting that existing liberal democracy *is* democracy, can avoid, by default, both the need to justify democracy and to theorise its realisation. We have seen this in both the logic of social democratic parties and in the more expansive thought of Eduard Bernstein. Both positions, however, involve a risk. Social democrats gamble that the institutions of liberal democracy are neutral enough instruments to allow themselves to be used centrally to transform capitalism to socialism. Bernstein believed that the expanded network of liberal democratic institutions of municipal government would achieve the same result. In both cases, the preparedness to take the risk is based on an extension of the positive mood with which all socialists view change. Change *will* occur as a consequence of democratic activity, *and it will* lead to socialism.

The positive mood regarding change, however, is insufficient if one doubts the democratic credentials of the liberal notion of democracy as contained to the status of influencing the separate sphere of government. The more one doubts these credentials, the more one is forced to develop credible theories for realising an alternative. Eurocommunists, as we have seen, developed a hybrid model that attempted to bridge the gap between the sphere of government and civil society. Democracy was to be located in both spheres. As we have seen, however, the extension of democracy to civil society, or more accurately, to social groups, is not of itself incompatible with liberal theories of pluralist democracy, *if* the purpose of such an extension is to gain support for a formal political party. This is the case in Eurocommunist thought. Thus, as with more conventional social

democratic thought, the Eurocommunist model relies mostly on a positive belief in the socially transformative capacity of democracy, which is viewed in instrumental terms as a means of influencing government. Eurocommunists, in relation to their theory of democracy, then, remain firmly within the realised, theorised, liberal model.

We have seen that the continuum that covers socialist theories of democracy finds one extreme in the works of Marx. Marx defers the issue of the realisation of democracy until after the realisation of socialism. In a post-revolutionary era, democracy may be realised through institutions such as those contained within the liberal model. The realisation of democracy is not a problem, because the conditions that made it problematic are wiped away under socialism. Social democrats, as we have just seen, fall along the middle of the continuum. For them, democracy is a means to realising socialism, not merely a consequence of it. In addition, democracy is seen as something that has already largely been realised, in liberal democratic institutions. Social democrats, therefore, do not need to theorise the realisation of democracy, because it already has been realised.

Pateman, Habermas and the priority of democracy

I now turn to examining the work of Carole Pateman on participatory democracy and the Jürgen Habermas' work on 'discursive' or 'communicative' democracy. These thinkers are examples of the diverse group of socialists who fall on the other extreme of the socialist continuum to Marx. For them democracy has a high, perhaps even independent, value, relative to socialism. Democracy is an end to be pursued in its own right, and also a means for transforming society. Democracy is not to be found in liberal democratic institutions, such as the franchise and the representative assembly - for these theorists, democracy is about collective interaction, deliberation, and decision-making.

Unlike social democrats, who tend to sidestep theorising the realisation of democracy by assuming that it already has been realised, Pateman and Habermas would reject liberal democracy's claim to encompass all that is 'democratic'. In addition, they would not defer the realisation of democracy until after the realisation of socialism, as did Marx. Democracy is something to be pursued *now*. Democracy has socially transformative capacities. All of this means that the realisation of democracy is a greater problem for Pateman and Habermas, than for the other socialists we have examined in this chapter. However, as we will see, their approach to the realisation of democracy is rather under-explored in their work, but its direction is very familiar. The republican vocabulary of civic virtue re-emerges in the remarkably un-republican context of these socialist thinkers.

During the 1960s, and especially after 1968, there emerged a trend in political thought which challenged contemporary views on the meaning of democracy. Stemming primarily from the 'New Left', this trend saw the dominant liberal democratic theory of democracy as ideologically barren and theoretically bankrupt. In order to counter liberal democratic theory, a theory of 'participatory democracy' was promulgated. This created a serious challenge to the prevailing orthodoxy, and has led to what Held describes as the "polarisation" of democratic theory (Held 1987: 243-264).

Carole Pateman, in her book *Participation and Democratic Theory* (1970), discusses two opposing concepts of democracy. The first is a theoretically suspect body of literature which dominates the contemporary study of democracy. The second is her alternative: 'participatory democracy'.²²⁸ The latter is presented as having the greatest links with earlier concepts of democracy (taken

²²⁸ Pateman's work is one of a large body of literature emerging at the time. See also for example: Bachrach (1975), Bohman (1989), Buggy (1991), Kramer (1972), Macpherson (1972, 1973, 1977), Pennock and Chapman (1975).

entirely from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries), and is given contemporary significance through an analysis of existing attempts to institute participatory democracy, particularly in the workplace and (the now former) Yugoslavia.

Pateman argues that in the period since the Second World War, liberal democratic theorists have been obsessed with the conditions necessary for political stability (Pateman 1970: 14).²²⁹ These theorists have proposed a binary opposition in world politics between democracy and totalitarianism “as the only two political alternatives available in the modern world” (Pateman 1970: 2). In line with our previous discussion, ‘realist’ liberal democratic theory understands democracy to be the “institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people’s vote” (Schumpeter 1976: 269). Pateman argues that Schumpeter’s work has been adopted uncritically by liberal democratic theorists, because it provided a seemingly realistic vision of the stable, democratic polity (Pateman 1970: 5).

Pateman argues that liberal democratic theorists such as Berelson, Dahl, Sartori and Eckstein, have drawn on Schumpeter’s model and, in so doing, reduced participation in democracy to the level of periodic voting in general elections (Pateman 1970: 5). Participation in liberal democracy is:

participation in the choice of decision makers. Therefore, the function of participation in the theory is solely a protective one; the protection of the individual from arbitrary decisions by elected leaders and the protection of his private interests (Pateman 1970: 14).

²²⁹ As we saw in Chapter Three, however, liberals are by no means the first to be concerned about stability, or realisability, of the democratic polity. Indeed, as a matter of theory, liberals are far less overtly concerned with the issue of stability than republicans. As a matter of *real politik*, however, it is certainly true that the actions of liberal democratic states have often been aimed at ensuring the best conditions for capitalism, meaning that political and economic stability has been a primary goal.

Insofar as popular participation exceeds the minimum level required to maintain the functioning of the government, it is seen as dangerous.²³⁰ Apathy in political matters is necessary for stability. Political equality is guaranteed by universal suffrage and equal access to channels of influence over leaders (Pateman 1970: 7-14).

Pateman's discussion of participatory democracy draws its theoretical heritage from the work of Rousseau, JS Mill and the Fabian socialist GDH Cole. From her discussion of these three thinkers, she draws up a theory of participatory democracy. The democratic theory of Rousseau and JS Mill has already been discussed in some detail and need not be repeated here. Both these theorists provide Pateman with the tools by which she theorises the realisation of participatory democracy. Pateman argues that Rousseau is a participatory theorist "par excellence" (Pateman 1970: 22). His theory, she argues, stresses the virtues of individual participation in terms of: the involvement of the citizen in making decisions; the protection of private interests and good government; and the civic education of the citizen:

The logic of the operation of the participatory system is such that he [the citizen] is 'forced' to deliberate according to his sense of justice, according to what Rousseau calls his 'constant will' because his fellow citizens can always resist the implementation of inequitable demands. As a result of participating the individual is educated to distinguish between his own impulses and desires, he learns to be a public as well as a private citizen (Pateman 1970: 24- 25).

Pateman's interest in the works of JS Mill stem from his notion of the positive role for government in educating and improving the mental life of the community (Pateman 1970: 28-29). Participatory institutions can enhance the quality of the mental life of the community by transcending the mere satisfaction of private

²³⁰ Pateman is being unfair in reducing liberal democratic theory to variants on competitive elite theory; as we saw in the last chapter, there is room within liberal democratic theories, such as pluralism, for broader understandings of political participation. Pluralists, however, ultimately share the liberal view that democracy is realised through its containment to the sphere of government. Pluralist activity, through interest groups, adds another way of influencing government to the more traditional exercise of the vote.

interests (the cornerstone of the utilitarian theories of Bentham and James Mill) through the involvement of people in the public life of the community (Pateman 1970: 29-30). For this to be effective, the community must be educated in the ways and workings of participation, both for the efficient functioning of these institutions and for their stability. This should be done by fostering participation at the local level, and in a wide variety of institutional contexts, where the overall stakes are not so high and, therefore, mistakes won't be so damaging and where the issues are more accessible to the community at large. Participation for JS Mill, writes Pateman, is a collective endeavour with strong educative and psychological effects:

Society can be seen as being composed of various political systems, the structure of authority of which has an important effect on the psychological qualities and attitudes of the individuals who interact within them; thus for the operation of a democratic polity at the national level, the necessary qualities in individuals can only be developed through the democratisation of authority structures in all political systems (Pateman 1970: 35).

Pateman then turns to GDH Cole, as a twentieth century example of a participatory theorist who, building on JS Mill's understanding of participation and Rousseau's notion of the binding character of the General Will, developed a theory of 'guild socialism' (Pateman 1970: 35-36). Democracy, in this scheme, is not contained to national representative institutions but is found in the participation of the individual in his or her 'associations' both with other individuals and with society in general (the ultimate form of association) (Pateman 1970: 36-37). Pateman argues that, according to Cole, industry offers the most efficient modern arena in which the individual can be educated in participation (Pateman 1970: 38).

Pateman's examination of the theories of democratic participation in Rousseau, JS Mill and GDH Cole, lays the groundwork for her argument about the nature of participatory democracy. In so doing, she also touches on the means by which

participatory democracy is realised, which has strong overtones of republican democratic theory.²³¹ In line with the key issues discussed at the beginning of this thesis, we need to know how participatory theorists such as Pateman define 'democracy', why they regard it as a 'good thing', how it is to be achieved, and most importantly how it is to be realised over time. Pateman argues that "participation refers to *(equal) participation in the making of decisions*" (Pateman 1970: 43 - my emphasis). Participatory democrats, therefore, define 'democracy' in terms of collective decision making about issues that directly concern participants. This can be seen in the way that Pateman locates the sites of participatory democracy. This reflects the general socialist concern to extend democracy beyond the sphere of government and into the sphere of civil society. These decisions, following Cole, and in line with the New Left agenda,²³² are best explored in the largest and most organised institution in modern societies: industry. This she later defends, arguing that "industry, with its relationships of superiority and subordination, is the most 'political' of all areas in which ordinary individuals interact and decisions taken there have a great effect on the rest of their lives" (Pateman 1970: 83-84). The implications of this are so important that

²³¹ The works of other participatory theorists tend to be in line with that outlined by Pateman. For example, C.B. Macpherson, writing both before and after Pateman, echoes and strengthens the approach with an ethical dimension. Macpherson argues that democracy, defined in terms of party competition and limited voter choice, *is a liberal notion* (Macpherson 1972: 10). Democracy in a liberal society has been 'transformed' by liberal principles. The universal ethical principle of all forms of democracy, however, is "to provide for the free development of human capacities, and to do this equally for all members of the society" (Macpherson 1972: 58). Macpherson argues that liberalism itself restricts this development because of the principle of utility maximisation and of the necessarily unequal distribution of power within the community (Macpherson 1972: 35-55, and 57-59). Liberal democracy will be, therefore, at an increasing moral disadvantage when compared to the Eastern bloc system and the underdeveloped nations (one party states), because they do not have the restrictions of liberalism placed upon them. What is needed is a 'post-liberal democratic theory', one which takes seriously the ideas of Marx and Rousseau and looks more towards a concept of democracy based on equality for all rather than on the liberty of utility maximising possessive individuals (Macpherson 1973: 172-184). Macpherson develops this critique further in *The Life and Times of Liberal Democracy* (1977), where he argues for a marrying of a competitive party system with principles of direct democracy. See also Ladd (1975).

²³² See Wainwright (1994) for a recent re-statement of New Left principles.

they are “sufficient to establish the validity or otherwise of the notion of participatory democracy” (Pateman 1970: 108).

The participatory theory of democracy described above has been the subject of some criticism. The most common critique offered is that of unrealisability. Dahl, in *After the Revolution* (1970), argues that a system of participatory democracy simply cannot work in a large and complex society.²³³ This traditional argument holds true as it is impossible to conceive of everyone in every community deliberating all the time on all the issues that affect the government of that community.²³⁴ This would be a devastating critique, except that it misses the point about participatory democracy. Dahl’s critique is dependent on an extreme, almost caricature-like picture of participatory democracy,²³⁵ as well as the liberal conception of democracy merely as a system of government, or of rule. Formal government is taken as the site of democracy. Participatory theorists see ‘real’ democracy occurring in much smaller and more manageable sites: the workplace, the community organisation, the specific interest group and the like.²³⁶ Democracy is about making decisions that affect the conditions of the life of the individual and the community.²³⁷

²³³ Nelson (1980) and Smith (1975) further question whether such a system would be desirable in the first place. Moore and Gray similarly argue that the ‘messy pluralism’ implied in participatory theory will, in the long run, make life worse rather than better for the participants (see Moore [1972: 68] and Gray [1986: 178-179]). See also Dorn (1978).

²³⁴ Burnheim makes a similar point in *Is Democracy Possible?* (1985). However, arranged against this view is the notion that such deliberation may be overcome technologically- see the ‘cybernetic’ argument of Lehman-Wilzig (1983) as an early example. Evans (1991) makes a similar claim.

²³⁵ See Skinner (1973).

²³⁶ Pateman makes this point in a later article (1986c).

²³⁷ It is of interest to note how each side has responded to the critiques of the other: Dahl, for example, has made concessions, in his work on economic democracy, recognising the existence of structural inequality, and the debilitating effect this has on liberal democracy, which he still sees as government by plural competition (Dahl 1989). The intellectual conflict detected by Skinner (1973) has largely declined, so much so that Adamson (1989) argues that there has been a ‘convergence’ of democratic theory in recent times.

Participatory democracy is direct, participative decision-making, typically in the workplace. Why is it a good thing? Pateman does not provide much argument on this point. However, she is in good company, if one considers the context of the generalised socialist faith in the 'goodness' of democracy. Her primary justification for participatory democracy appears to be psychological. Participation will improve people's feelings of belonging and of control over their own destinies. Alienation from the political process will be ameliorated by linking democracy to issues that directly affect the participant's lives. A secondary justification for participatory democracy is more concrete. The implications of the concept of industrial participatory democracy are such that substantial improvements in conditions and wages may occur, through the increased involvement of the workforce in making decisions that traditionally are made by management.²³⁸

Participatory democracy is not only a good thing because it delivers improvements in the participant's sense of social well-being and economic status, it is also educative. Pateman parodies Bachrach, another participatory theorist, suggesting that the participatory model is one "where maximum input (participation) is required and where output includes not just policies (decisions) but also the development of the social and political capacities of each individual, so that there is 'feedback' from output to input" (Pateman 1970: 43).²³⁹ It is this educative function of participation, which Pateman draws from Rousseau and JS Mill, that provides her with the principal tool by which participatory democracy is to be achieved and realised *at the same time*. It is only by participating that participatory democracy will be achieved, and it is only by participating that the

²³⁸ See Buggy (1991) for a recent re-statement of this idea.

²³⁹ Pateman, in commenting on the liberal theory of democracy notes Bachrach's analysis: "that the majority (non-élites) gain maximum output (policy decisions) from leaders with minimum input (participation) on their part" (Pateman 1970: 14).

participants will learn how to sustain participatory democracy over time, to *realise* it.

Pateman argues that the theory of participatory democracy depends on “the educative function of participation” (Pateman 1970: 49). Participatory democracy is a model based on the maximum involvement of the individual and the community in deciding the direction of their collective futures at all levels, requiring the socialisation of the participants regarding the ‘rules of the game’.²⁴⁰ The stability and viability of the participatory system is assured by ‘socialisation’, which is also given effect by participation. Pateman argues that it is crucial to a theory of participatory democracy that it recognise that individuals and institutions are not isolated:

The existence of representative institutions at a national level is not sufficient for democracy; for maximum participation by all people at that level socialisation, or ‘social training’, for democracy must take place in other spheres in order that the necessary individual attitudes and psychological qualities can be developed. This development takes place through the process of participation itself (Pateman 1970: 42).

Participation is educative in that the act educates the actor about the uses and limits of the act, and is thus, once established, self-sustaining and stable. The realisation of participatory democracy is thus theorised through a series of conceptual loops. The socialisation produced by participation is the means by which participatory democracy is realised. At a social level, the realisation of participatory democracy requires the existence of the participatory society. The realisation of the participatory society, in turn realises participatory democracy.

Pateman does not go on to explore the notion of socialisation in any great detail. However, it must be clear how it combines much of the republican notion of internalisation of the rules of political action (‘civic virtue’) with both Mills’ ideas of the importance of education in the political process. It remains unclear

²⁴⁰ Compare: Bobbio (1987).

whether socialisation works just at the level of a participant's actions or whether it modifies his or her passions as well. One suspects that participatory theorists would be reluctant to draw a distinction between the two, given the argument we found in Marx's thought that a person's consciousness is shaped by material relations of production. 'Passions', if they are part of a person's 'consciousness', are products of the relations of production. Therefore, if one changes the relations of production, perhaps by participatory democracy, a person's passions will change, as will his or her actions.

Participatory democratic theory posits that the self-governing community will be both stable and capable of reproducing itself, because of the educative effect of participation. There is an implicit faith in the possibility of successfully transforming liberal democratic society to participatory socialist society through the process of participation itself.²⁴¹ As we noted at the outset of this chapter, this positive mood toward change is common to all forms of socialism. Marx was convinced of the inevitability of the overthrow of capitalism. Social democrats are convinced that liberal democratic institutions can gradually transform society in socialist directions. Similarly, participatory theorists share a faith in the *positive* transformative effects of participation. As is argued in Braybrooke (1975), however, participation may well have a transformative effect on society, but this could just as well be conservative and regressive rather than positive and progressive as is usually portrayed by participatory theorists. Socialists anticipate the inevitability of change, unlike republicans who regard it with fear.

In sum, participatory theorists define themselves in opposition to one common 'enemy', that is the liberal concept of democracy. They valorise popular collective participation in decision making both as *defining* democracy and as a

²⁴¹ As we will see in the next chapter, the 'participatory imperative' Minson (1990) remains strong in some 'postmodern' theorisings of democracy, such as those of Chantal Mouffe.

value in itself. Workplace participation is often used as the primary institutional example of such activity. They follow the New Left in locating the site of political struggle within society and culture and, hence, not contained just to the formal public sphere.²⁴² In so doing they place much emphasis on the need to create a 'new political culture' based on the principles of participation and equality of access. It is assumed that the opportunity for culturally subordinated persons to express their views will lead to a change in existing society toward a more open and experimental society.

Overall, participatory democracy involves participation in the making of decisions. It is an essential characteristic of participatory democracy, in that it places primary focus on how decisions get made and by whom. This can be compared with the liberal notion of democracy as being confined to the selection of leaders, or in pluralist theory, to the influencing of the party system and organs of government by pressure groups. As we have seen, many socialists accept that democracy can legitimately be described in these terms, however, many also argue that this is just one form of democracy. Participatory theorists, however, hold more firmly to a 'pure' theory of democracy as direct participative decision-making by individuals and groups. The realisation of participative democratic decision-making is premised on a form of democratic education, or 'socialisation'. Participants must know the 'rules' and must bind themselves to them, in order that the system will work. We also find this notion in our last example of socialist democratic thought, the 'discursive' democratic theory of Jürgen Habermas.

²⁴² This is why I would regard most of the 'public sphere' arguments as extensions of the participatory model (see for example: Offe (1984: 176, 248, 264) and Keane (1984 & 1988). Their interests lie in the democratic potential of the interaction of social movements. To my mind, however, the 'democracy' that occupies this literature is the same as the 'democracy' of its more radical forebear: the participatory theorists. In both cases democracy is used not in the liberal sense of 'rule' or 'government', but in the sense of decision-making and in the interaction between people and groups. In liberal terms, democracy in these models is less about the 'executive' arm of the tripartite theory of government, and more about the internal conduct of the legislative.

The following section briefly discusses Habermas' notion of 'discursive' or 'communicative' democracy. The purpose of our discussion is not to delve deeply into this most complex of theorists, but to show how he, like the participatory theorists, approaches the issue of the realisation of democracy by reference to the ancient vocabulary of self-control. The reason for locating Habermas' democratic theory alongside the participatory model is threefold. Firstly, its focus is on democracy as a process of arriving at decisions rather than as an instrument for exercising government. In this regard it is similar to participatory theory, although it focuses more deeply on the process of democratic interaction. Secondly, like participatory theory, democracy has a high relative value in 'discursive' democratic theory, and 'democracy' is defined in terms other than those used by liberal democratic theory. Finally, we find that the issue of realisation is something that emerges as a problem to be theorised, and as with participatory theory, this is achieved in a relatively sketchy fashion by reference to self-control.

To use Habermas' phraseology, democracy is an exercise in 'communicative rationality', rather than 'instrumental rationality'. Habermas, and those who follow his line of reasoning,²⁴³ use 'democracy' to denote a particular mode of human interaction. In *Towards a Rational Society*, Habermas defines the "democratic form of decision making" as rational decisions "dependent on a consensus arrived at through discussion free from domination" (Habermas 1971:10). Habermasian 'democracy' involves the uncovering shared understandings. Such a notion of 'uncovering' has its theoretical roots in Husserl's notion of the "epistemological reduction",²⁴⁴ and Heidegger's

²⁴³ A small sample would be: Bohman (1989), Dryzek (1990), Mara (1985), Misgeld (1981), Warren (1989), and Young (1993).

²⁴⁴ Husserl (1964: 33-42) - first published in 1950. Husserl first presented his idea of the epistemological reduction, however, in a series of lectures in Göttingen in 1907.

subsequent notion of truth-as-uncovering.²⁴⁵ These were built into Habermas' early flirtation with a new transcendental basis for epistemology in *Knowledge and Human Interests*, that is, the idea of knowledge-constitutive interests.²⁴⁶ In democracy, the purely self-reflective nature of Habermas' "emancipatory cognitive interest" (Habermas 1972: 310), as typified by psycho-analysis, is turned into a process of reflection between people, an 'inter-subjective' process, to use the jargon.

Habermas follows the participatory theorists in defining his notion of democracy in contrast to liberal democratic theory. He compares "substantive democracy" or "genuine participation of citizens in the process of political will formation" (Habermas 1988: 36), with formal (ie liberal) democratic institutions which make the "administrative system" independent "of [the] legitimating will formation" (Habermas 1988: 36). This echoes Marx's notion of the separation of civil society and the state discussed earlier. Thus, democracy, which ideally should be "determined by the content of a form of life that takes into account the generalizable interests of all individuals", is reduced in liberalism to "a method of selecting leaders":

Democracy no longer has the goal of rationalising authority through the participation of citizens in discursive processes of will-formation. It is intended, instead, to make possible *compromises* between ruling élites (Habermas 1988: 123).

Democracy, in the Habermasian sense, is the political form of rational inter-subjective communication. It is emancipatory and, therefore, a 'good thing', because communication leads to consensus, as well as incorporating and

²⁴⁵ Heidegger (1990: 260-263; paragraphs 218-220) - first published in 1927.

²⁴⁶ See Habermas (1972: esp 308-315).

uncovering the “specific motives” [ie particular wills] of individuals. It is, thus, also an aid to individual autonomy and solidarity (Habermas 1988: 36).²⁴⁷

Despite the obvious questions one could raise regarding ‘rationality’, ‘freedom from domination’ and, the vital underpinning desire to arrive at a ‘consensus’, this basic definition of the democratic process runs virtually unaltered through Habermas’ later work. Habermas’ theory of ‘discursive’ democracy carries with it the same collapsing of achievement and realisation of democracy that we found in participatory theory. For example, in *Legitimation Crisis* he describes the ideal of ‘discourse’ in the following terms:

Discourse can be understood as the form of communication that is removed from contexts of experience and action and whose structure assures us: that the bracketed validity claims of assertions, recommendations, or warnings are the exclusive object of discussion; that participants, themes and contributions are not restricted except with reference to the goal of testing the validity claims in questions; that no force except that of the better argument is exercised; and that, as a result, all motives except that of the co-operative search for truth are excluded (Habermas 1988: 107-108).

You will note how Habermas incorporates achievement and realisation into the definition of democratic discourse. By undertaking to engage in democratic discourse, the participants at once achieve democracy, and realise it. The very act of engaging in discourse binds the participants to behave in ways that will contribute to, and not destroy, the interactive process. The consensus resulting from such a discussion expresses a “rational will” of “common interest[s] ascertained without deception” (Habermas 1988: 108). The ‘rationality’ arises from the process of deliberation itself, and the consensus is binding on the participants because they all, by virtue of their participation, “want it”. This need is explained as arising because the participants, by virtue of having become engaged in the free interplay of discourse, have bound themselves to both the process and the outcome of “discursive will formation” (Habermas 1988: 108).

²⁴⁷ See also Bohman (1989).

Habermas extends this notion of a rational, communicatively-centred democracy in his work on ‘communicative competence’, and in his engagement with Foucault and post-modernity in *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*. Throughout, he maintains his faith in the emancipatory content of ‘communicative action’, which in politics he would call democracy. He attacks those critics of the notion of rationality as “reckless”, and worse, “undifferentiated in their results” (Habermas 1990: 336-338). By the latter, he means that they “repudiate modern forms of life”, including the way in which modern knowledge has been classified. By refusing to conform to such classifications they side-step the traditional methods of critique (Habermas 1990: 336), which coincidentally form the basis of Habermas’ notion of inter-subjective communication.

In his later works on the theory of discursive democracy, Habermas turns to the new social movements of the 1970s that we first saw in Eurocommunist thought. Importantly, he retains the notion of the realisation of democracy through the very nature of discourse, but adds a distinctly republican flavour to it. For example, Habermas argues that “[a]utonomous self-organised public spheres” can arise in modern societies in the “centres of concentrated communication that arise spontaneously out of the microdomains of everyday practice” (Habermas 1990: 364). He finds that, typically, such ‘concentrations of communication’ are in grass-roots organisations, whose challenge, he says, is to maintain a separation from the institutions of the state while developing:

the prudent combination of power and intelligent self-restraint that is needed to sensitise the self-steering mechanisms of the state and the economy to the goal-oriented outcomes of radical democratic will formation (Habermas 1990: 364-365).

Habermas thus locates discursive democracy in public spheres separate from the state and economy and, in so doing, invokes, perhaps unconsciously, the classic republican language of prudence and self-control, or ‘intelligent self-restraint’, as the means by which these public spheres should operate.

While Habermas does not explore this notion in any great detail, it is intriguing to see how much the ancient language of virtue permeates modern theories of democracy. Perhaps this should not be surprising given the ancient roots of democracy itself. It does seem incongruous at first, however, that in Habermas' theory, with all its overtones of emancipation and the like, we should find that such emancipation is realised through the internalisation of the rules of discourse and the practices of self-control.²⁴⁸ Upon reflection, however, this incongruity illuminates an important point, namely, that for those socialist theorists of democracy who give a high priority to it, but who do not regard liberal democratic institutions as true 'democracy', the realisation of democracy is a bit of a problem. Theorists such as Habermas and Pateman turn to a vocabulary that lies outside of the socialist lexicon, because socialism does not provide them with the solutions to their problem. For other socialists, the realisation of democracy is not a problem, either because they accept that liberal democracy is democracy (social democrats) or because they defer the issue of realising democracy until after the realisation of socialism, when the conflicts that may make democracy difficult to realise no longer exist (eg Marx).

One can see, however, that the turn toward the language of restraint and virtue in Pateman and Habermas is neither whole-hearted nor triggered by the same concerns that motivated its earlier advocates. Neither Pateman nor Habermas is fearful of the potential of democracy to produce change in society, indeed, they clearly anticipate the capacity of democracy to bring about such change. Unlike republican thinkers and the Ancient Greeks, such change is assumed to be positive. Pateman and Habermas do not explore the notion of the realisation of democracy by restraint in any great detail. Instead, they prefer simply to note that

²⁴⁸ This has an interesting parallel to the Hegelian notion of positive freedom noted earlier in this chapter: freedom as the product of one 'doing one's duty'.

participation in the democratic act itself generates the conditions for its survival. Democracy, be it discursive or participatory, *realises itself*.

Conclusion

The central argument of this thesis is that the historians of democratic theory have neglected the way in which theorists of democracy have theorised the realisation of democracy. Socialist thought, more than any other that we have examined, finds itself caught up in an ideological shift that has profound implications for theories of democracy. The shift is in the fact that, unlike the other theories discussed in this thesis, ‘democracy’ was considered to be reasonably plausible, and was practiced quite widely as a form of government, by the time socialism became a powerful ideological force in the mid-nineteenth century. As a consequence, the idea of democracy required less *prima facie* justification for those theorists who, like those discussed in this chapter, deem ‘democracy’ to be a desirable or inevitable feature of socialism.

One might think that the decline in the requirement to justify ‘democracy’ would be a good thing for socialist theorists. This chapter has shown, however, that this is a mixed blessing. The liberal success in realising ‘democracy’ has claimed the theoretical high ground of realisability. Non-liberal notions of democracy can easily be dismissed from this position as ‘unrealisable’, and democratic theorists, as we have seen, have been under a requirement to theorise its realisation. Socialists must, therefore, respond by theorising the realisation of socialist democracy. This they have done in a number of ways.

As we have seen, one way of theorising the realisation of socialist democracy is to give it a low and dependent priority relative to the achievement of socialism. The example of Marx’s overall democratic thought shows that ‘true’ democracy can only be realised after the revolution in the capitalist relations of production. Once this has occurred, liberal or indeed other institutional forms of democracy,

may be employed to yield 'true' democracy. This is a consequence of the revolution breaking down capitalism and the bourgeois democratic ideology that contains civil society (i.e. economic and social relations) in a sphere separate from the state (i.e. politics and administration). Marx's vision of 'true' democracy was essentially a modern liberal one, that is, based on the universal suffrage as the principal means by which the people's interests can be translated into a common will. In 'true' democracy voters will understand their real economic and social interests and will exercise the franchise accordingly. Liberal democratic institutional arrangements may, therefore, be devices that can be used to realise 'true' democracy in a post-revolutionary situation. For Marx, the realisation of true democracy is not a problem to be theorised, instead the *real* problem is to realise socialism.

Not all socialists, however, are prepared to defer the realisation of democracy until after the realisation of socialism. Indeed, as we have seen, social democrats adopt the position that existing liberal democratic institutions, perhaps with a bit of 'tweaking', can be the means of realising socialism. By accepting that liberal democracy *is* democracy they can sidestep, by default, both the need to justify democracy and to theorise its realisation. Social democrats gamble that the existing liberal democratic state is a neutral enough instrument to allow itself to be used centrally to transform capitalism to socialism. The examples of Eduard Bernstein and the 'Eurocommunists' have shown us that even when liberal democratic institutions are to be augmented by more immediate locations of democracy, at the municipal level or by incorporating new social movements, this is not of itself incompatible with liberal democratic theory. The key difference is in the social democrats' faith in the socially transformative potential of liberal democratic institutions. They believe that socialism can be realised through the existing realised forms of democracy. Of course, the assumed transformative potential with which social democrats view liberal democratic institutions contrasts with the liberal theoretical purpose for these institutions. Liberalism

seeks to contain democracy within institutional structures, thereby rendering it stable and therefore realisable. Perhaps it is all a question of perspective.

The move to extend democracy to civil society takes a radical turn when 'true' democracy is posited as lying outside the realm of the separate liberal sphere of government. Once this move is made, socialists are forced into a position of explaining why the liberal democratic model is inadequate and, having done this, of positing an alternative, justifying it, and importantly, promulgating a theory for its realisation. The inadequacy of the liberal democratic model could be argued straight from the early philosophical thought of Marx, or as in the case of Pateman, from a re-examination of early liberals such as James and JS Mill, Bentham, and also from Rousseau. We have seen alternative concepts of democracy presented in Pateman's theory of participatory democracy and in Habermas' theory of discursive democracy. Each presents a notion of democracy as located not primarily in the sphere of government, but in the sphere of civil society. Democracy is understood in terms of a system of social interrelations, specifically, a method of decision-making or will-formation. Pateman justifies such 'democracy' primarily in terms of the psychological benefits accrued to the participants, as they become involved and empowered in a process of participation. Participatory theorists also hold that there may also be economic and social benefits that flow from the consequences of industrial democracy. Habermas links discursive democracy to the individual's interest in emancipation and autonomy.

This chapter has noted that the issue of realisation is under-explored in Pateman and Habermas' theories of a socialist democracy. The high priority given to such democracy means that it cannot wait until after socialism is realised. Indeed it is a crucial means of achieving socialism, where socialism is still held to be the final goal. The problem, then, is how to theorise the realisation of democracy. Here we have found an interesting move, as the old republican

language of civic virtue re-emerges, as 'socialisation' and 'self-restraint', in a context far removed from republicanism.

Civic virtue, you will recall, emerged originally in a climate of pessimism, that is, pessimism about the likelihood and direction of change in the polity. The polity was inherently unstable, change was always degenerative and, usually irreversible. Virtue provided republicans with a theoretical bulwark against change. Virtue was to be achieved through the control, by citizens, of their actions and, in the case of Rousseau, through the indirect self-control of the passions. Virtue was not only justified as the means of holding back change, it was also 'good' for the individual concerned. Virtue, republicans believed, led to increased moral autonomy. This contrasts with the Ancient notion of virtue as preserving and improving the individual's 'health' and social standing.

Clearly, the primary motivation behind the return to virtue is different when we compare socialists and republicans. The republican fear of institutional instability is not something that socialists, of any persuasion, would want to resist as a matter of principle. Indeed, instability and change in the liberal polity is something to be welcomed and encouraged. Self-control is not justified in order to uphold the stability of the liberal polity. Its only purpose in participatory and discursive theories is, it seems, to realise the democratic act itself, that is, to provide a set of mutually understood 'rules' upon which the participants can depend. As we have seen, participatory theorists focus their energy on guiding the motivation of democratic participants towards a non-liberal set of 'rules' of behaviour, a new ideology as it were. 'Socialisation' is the vehicle by which this is to be achieved. Discourse theorists like Habermas, on the other hand, rely on the internal logic of the speech act itself to provide such rules.

In the end, it is striking to contemplate the extent to which the language of even the most radical of socialist theories of democracies is beholden to the language of the past. It seems that the ancient notion of democracy carries with it

a lot of 'baggage', when it comes to theorising its realisation. With this our discussion of the issue of realisation in the main schools of democratic thought is completed. Before ending this thesis, however, I want to consider further the nexus between the issue of realisation in democratic theory, and the realisation of democracy itself, in the context of both its ancient origins and some recent attempts at 'postmodern' democratic theory.

CHAPTER SIX

The Ends of Democratic Theory

The previous chapters have completed our examination of how the main schools of democratic theory have theorised the realisation of democracy. At the outset of this thesis, it was noted that the historiography of democratic theory neglects the issue of realisation in its subject matter. The preceding chapters have sought to redress this neglect. Before concluding this thesis, however, I want to dwell on the nexus between ‘realisation’ in democratic theory and the realisation of democracy itself. The vehicle used in this chapter to explore this nexus is some recent democratic theory. These theories clearly illustrate that there is an important distinction to be drawn between the realisation of democracy in democratic theory, and the realisation of democracy in practice. This distinction has important ramifications for the way democratic theory is to be understood.

This chapter discusses the ‘relativist’ work of Paul Feyerabend and John Keane, and the ‘postmodernism’ of Richard Rorty and Chantal Mouffe. For the purposes of my argument, this ‘postmodernism’ and ‘relativism’ will be treated as roughly equivalent. While in the broader philosophical context such a move would be highly problematic, it is not here. Each of the authors engages with, and draws inspiration from, at least one other of the theorists who use a different descriptor. For example, Keane (‘relativism’) responds to Mouffe (‘postmodernism’), who responds to Rorty (‘postmodernism’) who responds to Feyerabend (‘relativism’). Feyerabend classifies Rorty as a ‘relativist’. We will find that these theorists fall into two camps, either defending liberal democracy and its institutions, or being dissatisfied with them. My purpose is not to engage critically with these theories, as this would be a thesis in itself, but rather, in keeping with the approach taken throughout this thesis, to show how they approach the issue of realisation in democratic theory.

While there is some consistency between the theorists discussed in this chapter and the ones examined in previous chapters there is, however, one important point of disjuncture. 'Postmodern' and 'relativist' theories of democracy depart from the commitment to the universal truth claims that underpin the schools of thought discussed in this thesis, as well as the concomitant belief in the priority of theory over practice. We will find that in shearing democracy off from a universal truth claim, it becomes difficult to theorise the realisation of democracy, unless it has already been realised *in practice*. This finding reinforces the conservative tendency already identified in some democratic theory. We have seen that the realisation of liberal democracy has meant that supporters of it occupy a theoretically powerful position, in not having to theorise its realisation. They can also easily dismiss non-liberal theories of democracy as 'impractical', or unrealisable. In this chapter, we find that Feyerabend, Rorty, and to a lesser extent, Keane, all adopt this position. In contrast, where 'democracy' is thought not to have been realised in liberal democracies, we find that the postmodern/relativist approach, such as that taken by Mouffe, makes it difficult to theorise its realisation. This means that 'postmodern' and 'relativist' democratic theorists (of any persuasion) must accept that the nexus between the realisation of democracy in democratic theory and in democratic practice is looser than many theorists in the past would have accepted. With this finding, we return to the original Classical paradox, namely, that democracy was something that was realised independently of and prior to its theorisation.

Protagoras revived? Feyerabend

The recent prominence of French philosophy, in the form of poststructuralism and postmodernism, is but the latest in a long tradition of philosophy that has challenged the notion of abstract universal truths. More than two thousand years ago, Aristotle attacked this 'relativist' approach to philosophy in his criticism of

Protagoras in *Metaphysics*.²⁴⁹ Aristotle's argument, which remains the classic attack on relativism,²⁵⁰ is that Protagoras and his ilk must be prepared to believe that two contradictory things about the same thing can be true, at the same time. Protagoras' dictum "of all things the measure is Man, of the things that are, that they are, and of the things that are not, that they are not" (Freeman 1952: 125), is held by Aristotle to mean that truth in such a scheme is a matter of human belief. Humans could quite conceivably believe contradictory things about the same thing, thereby destroying the *exclusive* nature demanded of 'truth' by the Socratic philosophers, Aristotle included (*Metaphysics* IV: 4 (1007b)).

Paul Feyerabend's writings from the 1960's to 1980's, lay claim the 'Protagorean' mantle, particularly in relation to the philosophy of science, and to democratic theory.²⁵¹ Feyerabend, we will see, neatly addresses the four criteria for democratic theory outlined earlier in this thesis. 'Democracy' is defined as liberal democracy. It is justified because it contributes to a knowledge-rich, egalitarian society. Its achievement and realisation requires no theorisation, simply because it exists.

The impetus of Feyerabend's work lies in the challenge to science's claim to superior 'objective' knowledge, over other knowledge sources, particularly as a consequence of Thomas Kuhn's study of the history of changes in scientific thinking.²⁵² Kuhn had found such changes to be of a revolutionary nature, rather than the steady incremental change presupposed by earlier historians and philosophers of science. Kuhn formulated a theory of scientific 'paradigms'

²⁴⁹ Aristotle (1947-62) - hereafter *Metaphysics*.

²⁵⁰ See: Margolis (1991).

²⁵¹ See: Feyerabend (1978: 9 & 28).

²⁵² See Kuhn (1970).

through which the scientific community determined that which was to be true and which method was to reveal such truth. Scientific method and scientific truth derived their potency from the values of the scientific community, not necessarily from their correspondence to an abstract universal truth. Paradigms, as with all belief systems, could be very resistant to change, even in the face of incommensurable evidence. Changes in paradigms, that is, ‘paradigm shifts’, tend to be violent and rapid, as one belief system collapses and is replaced by another.²⁵³

Kuhn’s paradigm theory had tremendous ‘relativist’ overtones. It appeared that he was arguing that the basis of claims to ‘truth’ was not derived from correspondence with some timeless, abstract, absolute, and *universal* source of ‘truth’, but were derived from the belief system of the claimant. Truth, it appears, was relative rather than universal. However, Kuhn later tempered the relativist nature of his theory, by positing five universal ‘characteristics of a good scientific theory’.²⁵⁴

Feyerabend resists Kuhn’s turn toward universal criteria for assessing scientific theories. Indeed, he argues that Kuhn’s theory of scientific paradigms is ‘cumbersome’ when compared with his notion of relativism, which he traces back to JS Mill. Importantly, while Kuhn tended to limit the scope of his work to the philosophy of science, Feyerabend *extends* his work into non-scientific knowledge and politics. In a paper published in 1980, he outlines this theory, and underpins it with a ‘relativist’ theory of democracy. ‘Democratic relativism’ allows for equal rights for conflictual beliefs, and not the privileging of one belief over the others.

²⁵³ See: Chalmers (1982: 89-100).

²⁵⁴ These are: “accuracy, consistency, scope, simplicity and fruitfulness” (Kuhn 1977: 321-322). See also Margolis (1991: 28-30).

Feyerabend begins by posing the question: “on the basis of what standards, can the citizens of a democracy judge the institutions that surround them and the things that they produce?” (Feyerabend 1980: 3). In the past, the answer may well have been the standard of ‘scientific’ rationality; however, Feyerabend wishes to call this assumption into question. Scientific rationality is typified in Newton’s methodology for scientific enquiry: first, find the facts; second, derive laws; finally, devise hypotheses for explaining the laws. Theoretical imagination (speculation) is devalued in favour of the experimental exposure of ‘facts’. Feyerabend, however, regards prior speculation as a worthwhile exercise if, and only if, it is subject to testing, and that it proves itself to be the only hypothesis capable of explaining the facts (Feyerabend 1980: 3-4).

Feyerabend argues that there are social and political implications arising from the opening up of science, and other forms of knowledge to prior speculation, that is, the kind of deductive reasoning we have found used by James Mill. Further, Feyerabend follows JS Mill’s argument in *On Liberty*, to the effect that such knowledge systems could exist only in intellectually pluralistic societies, the societies in which people develop best. This is because:

- i) particular views held may well be wrong;
- ii) particular views may well be only partially true, and the rest of the truth will only be revealed in a society that does not restrict debate;
- iii) a particular view held may well be true but will not be held on rational grounds;
- iv) the meaning of a particular view will not be understood unless it is seen in comparison with other views (Feyerabend 1980: 4).

Feyerabend argues that reasons (i) and (ii), are borne out by the history of science (Feyerabend 1980: 4). Pluralism is required within science because:

a set-back for a theory, a point of view, an ideology must not be taken as a reason for eliminating it. ... *A science interested in finding truth must therefore retain all the ideas of mankind for possible use or, to put it differently: the history of ideas is an essential part of scientific method* (Feyerabend 1980: 5 - original emphasis).

Reasons (iii) and (iv) are also borne out by the “depressing” phenomenon that when a new theory triumphs, it leads to “a considerable decrease of rationality and understanding” in those that employ it. It becomes the new status quo, devaluing opposing positions, and eliminating the possibility of alternatives being taken seriously (Feyerabend 1980: 5-6). Mill argues, and Feyerabend agrees, that in a rational inquiry “‘Outmoded’ views [should] ... be kept alive both because they please some people and because the most advanced theories cannot be understood and examined without their help” (Feyerabend 1980: 7). Feyerabend argues that this position survives in the practice of twentieth century science, but not in the philosophy of science, which uses rules of formal logic that eliminate alternative positions (Feyerabend 1980: 8-9).

Feyerabend extends his notion of relativistic pluralism beyond the internal operations of individual schools of knowledge to society at large. He suggests that “a free society must not be left at the mercy of the institutions it contains - it must be able to supervise and control them” (Feyerabend 1980: 9). This supervision is done by “citizens and democratic councils” (Feyerabend 1980: 9), but what criteria are to be used?: “To evaluate, the citizens need intellectual guides, they need standards” (Feyerabend 1980: 10). The use of scientific standards would logically require the citizen to be either a scientist, or to defer to scientific advice. In either case, the scientific institution would be controlling the citizens, not vice versa. The identification of other standards²⁵⁵ does not explain why one set of standards should be preferred to another, except through the creation of the same kind of intellectual élitism that has occurred in the philosophy of science. In searching for *the* standard by which to judge, the intellectual is forced to be élitist: either your standards agree with mine or they are irrational and, therefore, need be discarded (Feyerabend 1980: 10-12).

²⁵⁵ In the manner of Lakatos (Feyerabend 1980:10-11)- see also Chalmers (1982: 80-87).

Feyerabend rejects this 'elitism', and hence, the use of a universal standard as the basis for judging democracy. Instead "*a citizen will use the standard of the tradition to which he belongs ... the epistemic criteria which decide what is knowledge and what not are determined by the traditions themselves and not by outside agencies*" (Feyerabend 1980: 11-12 - original emphasis). This is not an entirely closed process, as people learn (Feyerabend 1980: 12), and presumably may belong to different groups with different traditions.

According to Feyerabend, anti-élitist relativism is a reasonable position to take for four reasons. Firstly, relativism is no more 'irrational' than universalism - both are based on *belief*. It is *irrational* to believe that we can identify the best standard by its results, both because it assumes a belief in the existence of an Archimedean point from which to judge; and, because it assumes a belief that results can be measured or identified (in scientific fashion). Secondly, we do have a choice of belief systems; universalist science is not omnipresent, and besides, omnipresence does not imply justification.²⁵⁶ Thirdly, élitism is not harmless nor can it be said to be equalising, just because in theory everyone equally can become a member of an élite: in order to become a member of an élite one must adopt its fundamental premise of inequality and, therefore, one must accept inequality - the argument is, he says, circular (Feyerabend 1980: 13-14).

The most substantial criticism of relativism is also Feyerabend's fourth and most important criterion of reasonableness. Critics of relativism have argued that it must tolerate chaos, racism, anti-Semitism (etc) and an inability to judge between ideas. Feyerabend replies that "democratic relativism denies the right of traditions to impose their forms of life on others, and it therefore recommends the

²⁵⁶ Feyerabend is referring to the naturalistic fallacy mentioned in Chapter Four, namely that, that which exists needs no justification. Feyerabend does not explain how one could 'justify' something except by appeal to some universal standard. One implication of the turn to relative standards is that there can be no universal justification of *anything*, because others may not hold the same standards for judging the merit of a thing.

protection of traditions from outside” (Feyerabend 1980: 14). This does not, however, lead to individualism because the:

belief that the institutions of a free society should protect the individual and not traditions, is closely connected with the liberal belief that individuals can exist independently of all traditions. ... [but] a foetus is not a fully fledged human being; it needs a tradition to become that, so traditions do become the prime elements of society (Feyerabend 1980: 14).

Where a society chooses to interfere in a tradition, and it *may have to*, it will do so on relativistic grounds rather than appeal to a universal ‘expert’: the “*fundamental debates between traditions are debates between laymen which can and should be settled by no higher authority than ... the authority of laymen, i.e. democratic councils*” (Feyerabend 1980: 14-16 - original emphasis).

As well as relativism *per se* being a reasonable alternative to universalism, Feyerabend argues that his notion of a pluralistic, anti-élitist *democratic* relativism has a number of appealing characteristics. Firstly, it upholds an egalitarian right to difference: people have a right to live as they see fit, and what they choose to do in no way affects their claim to rationality, citizenship or life (Feyerabend 1980: 15). Following JS Mill, Feyerabend argues that democratic cultural pluralism allows for inter-cultural learning and appreciation of alternatives. This, in turn, will lead to the formation of a better society (Feyerabend 1980: 15-16). Finally, history is on Feyerabend’s side: a universalist tradition, like the philosophy of science, cannot remember where its ideas have come from and why they were formulated. This leads to a restriction on examining what may turn out to be fruitful alternatives (Feyerabend 1980: 16).

While Feyerabend has much to say on why his notion of democratic relativism is appealing, he has little to say on the issue of its realisation. This is not to say that he ignores this intrinsically important issue, rather he, like Richard Rorty, simply locates his theory *within existing liberal democratic institutions*. In answer to the question of how to introduce democratic relativism and “keep the

various traditions in place and prevent them from overwhelming each other by force”, Feyerabend replies that:

the necessary institutions *already exist*: almost all traditions are part of societies with a firmly entrenched protective machinery. The question is therefore not how to *construct* such a machinery, but how to *loosen it up* and how to detach it from the traditions now using it exclusively for their own purposes (Feyerabend 1980: 17 - original emphasis).

You will note a number of key features of this argument. Democracy depends on protective institutions, conceived quite literally as ‘machinery’. These institutions are already there, in the existing liberal democracies, but they have become captured by universalist traditions, such as the philosophy of science. Thus, liberal democratic institutions need to be ‘loosened up’ to allow the expression of alternative traditions. This cannot be imposed from above, he says, by “a gang of radical intellectuals” (Feyerabend 1980: 17). Presumably, this is because ‘radical intellectuals’ will be merely substituting one tradition for another. Rather, Feyerabend believes that democratic relativism will be realised in an organic fashion:

it will be realized *from within*, by those who *want* to become independent, and in the manner *they* find most suitable (if they are a lazy bunch they will move *very* slowly, and with long periods of rest in between their political interventions). What counts are not intellectual schemes, but the wishes of those who want change (Feyerabend 1980: 17 - original emphasis).²⁵⁷

Feyerabend, therefore, avoids the need to theorise the realisation of relativist democracy, by locating this ‘democracy’ within existing liberal democratic institutions. In the broad, Feyerabend’s ‘epistemological anarchism’ has been the subject of much criticism.²⁵⁸ My purpose here is not to repeat these criticisms but

²⁵⁷ See further: Feyerabend (1978).

²⁵⁸ See for example: Alford (1985), Chalmers (1982: 134-145), Yates (1984 & 1985). Margolis argues that Feyerabend (as well as Rorty and Lyotard) are not ‘robust’ relativists, but merely relationalists who are ultimately caught in the self-referential paradox identified in the Socratic tradition (Margolis 1991: 189-203; esp. 196-203). Rorty merely comments that Feyerabend has “misdescribed” his project (as well as Rorty’s) as ‘relativism’, when what is intended is to turn the debate from issues of epistemology and metaphysics to the question of “the self-image our society should have” (Rorty 1991e: 28).

to comment briefly on the 'democratic' mantle that Feyerabend claims for himself, before wrapping up with a discussion of the place of realisation in his theory.

We saw in Chapter Two how Protagoras was an important philosophical figure for the critics of Athenian democracy. It is not surprising that Feyerabend, the self-proclaimed Protagorean, would find the language of democracy instinctively appealing, particularly when updated with a bit of JS Mill and a touch of pluralist theory. Feyerabend does not demonstrate, however, a strong link between 'democracy' and Feyerabendian relativism. The point simply is this: a Feyerabendian relativistic society need not be a democracy, all it has to be is *tolerant*. It may be that democracy, when realised, will lead to tolerance for the expression of views from differing traditions, but this is not necessarily the case. Further, it is not inconceivable that similar conditions of tolerance may arise in non-democracies.

In turning to liberal democracy as the pre-existing, if calcified, site for his democratic relativism, Feyerabend also neatly avoids the need to theorise how such 'democracy' may be realised. For Feyerabend, democracy has been realised, so there is no need to theorise it. Indeed, merely engaging with Feyerabend over the capacity of liberal institutions and liberal citizens to make the change to relativism, implies an acceptance of the basic terms of the debate. If existing institutions are too calcified, too unresponsive, to yield relativist democracy then it is merely a question of designing better institutions. If citizens are too lazy to want change, then it either means that they are not very unhappy with the status quo, or that they need to be exposed to a stiff dose of the democratic tradition. In any case, the terms of the debate have been restricted to those demanded by liberal democratic theory, namely, that democracy is realised through its institutional containment.

If, at a deeper level, one were to ask whether democracy could be said to be encompassed by the liberal democratic institutional model, Feyerabend could, quite justifiably, merely argue that this was the case viewed from *within the liberal democratic tradition*. Here we run into the type of circular and irresolvable disagreement much beloved by critics of relativism. For example, it would not be unusual for someone like Carole Pateman to counter-claim that Feyerabend's 'democracy', is not 'democracy' within *her* tradition. Indeed, Pateman makes just such a point in responding to a debate over social choice theory and democracy. It is not, she charges, "an argument about democracy [it] is, rather, an argument internal to individualist liberal theory. The latter is theoretically distinct from democratic theory at virtually every point" (Pateman 1986c: 39). Implicitly, Pateman distinguishes herself from Feyerabend because her notion of democracy is not relative to *an* intellectual tradition, it is relative to *the* intellectual tradition, that is, it is part of a universal theory of democracy.

Feyerabend sidesteps the issue of theorising the realisation of democracy by accepting that existing 'democracies' are what they say they are. In this, he is in the same boat as many liberal democratic theorists and, as we have seen, many social democrats. Where Feyerabend differs from these others is in his starting point. Feyerabend's relativism differs from liberalism's anthropocentrism in that, for the latter, 'man' may well be the 'measure', but there are a number of assumed universal characteristics of man's 'nature' (such as individualism etc). The social democratic position contains the generalised faith of all socialists in the inevitability and rightness of socialism. In basing his theory of democracy on relativism, Feyerabend cannot draw on any of these universal assumptions. Feyerabend, therefore, cannot justify his argument on the basis of universal standards but, instead, must hope that his interlocutors accept the standards he has chosen. This is a fundamentally weak position to be in, but it is one he, and other relativists, cannot avoid.

Thinking 'I' but speaking 'We': Rorty on liberal democracy

One might be tempted to ask “can we avoid the relativist dilemma?” but this would, according to Richard Rorty, merely be a case of succumbing to the demand for universal ‘objective’ truth fostered by the Enlightenment. What is needed instead, he argues, is “a pragmatist conception of truth” and a “conception of rationality as criterionless muddling through” (Rorty 1991e: 28).

In his time, Rorty has managed to antagonise many of his philosophical colleagues. This has occurred as a result of his characterisation of Philosophy ‘with a capital “P”’²⁵⁹ as essentially “pointless” (Rorty 1991b: 2). Capital ‘P’ philosophy, he argues, is that whole tradition of thought stretching back to the Greeks that has given us idealism, materialism and all the other schools of philosophical thought. These are, he argues, predicated on the belief that knowledge is about getting our accounts of reality right (Rorty 1991b: 1). All of this philosophical arguing is no doubt interesting for the participants and provides for a secure career path for intellectuals, but it does not help us acquire “habits of action for coping with reality” (Rorty 1991b: 1), that is, it is not *pragmatic*.

The means by which Rorty arrives at the conclusion that Philosophy is pointless, that is, that it has nothing practical to say about how we live our lives, is a rather familiar one. Like Feyerabend, Rorty wants to “disentangle bourgeois liberal institutions from the vocabulary that these institutions inherited from the Enlightenment” (Rorty 1991d: 199). This vocabulary is ostensibly abstract and neutral: it is the language, the ‘metanarratives’, so distrusted by Jean-François Lyotard,²⁶⁰ of liberal rights or, for that matter, the socialist emancipation of reason and of labour (Rorty 1991d: 199). Rorty argues that the Archimedean point

²⁵⁹ See Rorty (1982), esp. “Introduction”.

²⁶⁰ See Keane’s discussion of Lyotard below, and also: Lyotard (1992: 11-32); compare Rorty (1991a).

assumed by such neutrality is a chimera, that we can only regard the world through the lens of our historical specificity. This 'lens' Rorty locates, in a typically postmodern move, in our vocabulary, our language.

The linguistic turn adopted by Rorty is quite extreme: “*no* linguistic items represent *any* nonlinguistic items” (Rorty 1991b: 2). More than just being ‘contingent’, that is, bound in history and culture (Rorty 1989: 1-22), language is *all there is*. The ‘real world’ is, in a sense, a linguistic artefact. The consequences of this for philosophy are profound. These have been well explored and subjected to much criticism elsewhere in the literature directly on Rorty,²⁶¹ and, more indirectly, in the literature on the consequences of pragmatism, poststructuralism, and postmodernism.²⁶²

Rorty’s arguments are of particular interest for this thesis, because of the implications arising from the rejection of universal truths, which flow from his linguistic turn. If there is *no* absolute or true ‘democracy’, for example, then democratic theory and ‘Philosophy’ is merely the product of a language game rooted within the culture of the author. It may be interesting for democratic theorists to talk as if democracy surpasses specific cultures, but that is as far as it goes. This is because Philosophy is the internally referential language of philosophers, and is not the language of politics and democracy. Democratic theory in this view does not help us cope with democracy.

Rorty is a creature of contradictions. On the one hand he dismisses Philosophy and hence, by implication, democratic theory as pointless. On the other hand, he

²⁶¹ A small sample would be: Comay (1986), Connolly (1983), Foelber (1994), Fischer (1990), Gunn (1995), Hendley (1995), Lentricchia (1983), Magnus (1995), Moussa (1991), Nevo (1995), Saward (1994), Wain (1993), and Wolin (1990).

²⁶² This has been something of a cottage industry. See for example: Bradbury (1983), Cascardi (1988), Dunn (1991), Hatab (1995) MacDonald (1990), Madison (1991), Patton (1991), Thiele (1995), and Wellner (1991).

engages in democratic theory itself, in order to show how “democracy can get along without philosophical presuppositions” (Rorty 1988: 261). Rorty is quite deliberate in limiting this confident prediction to liberal democracy only. Like Feyerabend before him, Rorty positions liberal democracy outside of the metaphysics of traditional democratic theory. He does this most explicitly in his article “The Priority of Democracy to Philosophy” (Rorty 1988) and, to a lesser extent, in his reply to Bernstein’s pre-publication critique of his article in “Thugs and Theorists: a reply to Bernstein” (Rorty 1987).

Rorty’s argument in relation to liberal democracy rests on three simple points: firstly, that liberal democracies exist and are democratic by virtue of their self-description; secondly, that theorising or Philosophising such democracy is irrelevant to our understanding of our democracy; and, thirdly, that there are good reasons, internal to liberal societies, for preferring liberal democracy to other forms of political organisation.

As a consequence of his approach, Rorty can do no more than assume that liberal democracies exist and that they are democratic. The first is an uncontroversial assumption. The second, as we have seen, would be disputed by many democratic theorists. The consequence of the rejection of the notion of absolute knowledge about anything, in favour of the notion of culturally-contingent linguistically-mediated knowledge, is that Rorty cannot define in absolute terms what democracy is and, therefore, cannot compare this with liberal democratic theory and practice. Following Rorty’s line of argument, ‘democracy’ is a term that gains meaning from the context of its use. It means what it is believed to mean. Liberal democracies are democratic because liberal democrats believe this to be so.²⁶³

²⁶³ Saward describes this as a ‘definitional fallacy’: “he [Rorty] assumes, in Holden’s terms, ‘that political systems are democracies simply because they are commonly called democracies’” (Holden quoted in Saward 1994: 206).

Rorty relies on what could be termed the ‘mountain-climber’s’ definition and justification of liberal democracy, that is, because it is there. Skinner, of course, had earlier criticised a similar stance taken by ‘empirical theorists’ of democracy who adjusted their definition of democracy to meet what they found in prevailing practice (Skinner 1973).²⁶⁴ Seen from Rorty’s perspective, however, this is hardly a devastating criticism, as there is no alternative open to him, or for that matter, open to any theorist of democracy: “what counts as rational or fanatical is relative to the group to which we think it necessary to justify ourselves - to the body of shared belief that determines the reference of the word ‘we’” (Rorty 1988: 259).

According to Rorty, liberal democracy does not need to be supported or justified by philosophy, indeed *imposing* a philosophy may have negative consequences. Rorty argues that, just as Enlightenment thinkers bracketed religious topics when building political institutions, so we should bracket philosophical topics: “[they] are [as] irrelevant to politics as Jefferson thought questions about the Trinity and about Transubstantiation” (Rorty 1988: 262). Using a discussion of Rawls, Rorty pursues the line of reasoning that because we do not have an essence pre-dating history or divinely ordained, “we heirs of the Enlightenment ... [a]s citizens and as social theorists ... can be indifferent to philosophical disagreements” (Rorty 1988: 263) in discussing politics. We should, instead, rely on the “basic intuitive ideas that are embedded in the political institutions of a democratic society and the public traditions of their interpretation” (Rorty 1988: 262).

There is no need to philosophise about democracy in order to defend it, *if all we are defending is our own understanding of democracy*. All we need is a “historico-sociological description of the way we live now” (Rorty 1988: 265). Timeless philosophy simply is not relevant to our understanding of our

²⁶⁴ See also Seward (1994: 206).

democracy: “one can get along with common sense and social science” (Rorty 1988: 270). Thus, according to Rorty, the worth of liberal democratic institutions may be measured by “the moral intuitions of the particular historical community that ... created those institutions” (Rorty 1988: 269). Liberal democracy is, therefore, a ‘good thing’ because liberal democrats judge it to be so.²⁶⁵

In addition to arguing that liberal democrats do not need to have a Philosophical justification for preferring liberal democracy, Rorty argues that such a justification would only give ammunition to the critics of liberal democracy. Rorty believes that the liberal democrat does not have to adopt the vocabulary of the ‘enemy’ of liberal democracy in order to argue with him or her.²⁶⁶ Indeed, the liberal democrat does not have to engage with them at all. If one tries to defend liberal democracy on Philosophical grounds, the fact that there is a common language of Philosophy will give anti-liberal views equal argumentative status as liberal ones. Seen from the perspective of one wishing to defend liberal democracy, this seems like a silly tactical move: why give the ‘enemies’ of liberal democracy the opportunity to engage in a debate in terms that are quite favourable to them? Why not just “refuse to answer” their questions (Rorty 1988: 168-169)?

²⁶⁵ It has been argued that Rorty’s reliance on “settled social habits” (Rorty 1988: 266) as the basis of choice-making leads to ethnocentrism and relativism (See: Wolin (1990); Fraser (1990); compare Rorty (1991c). Certainly, Rorty does concede that his “view that human beings are centreless networks of beliefs and desires, and that their vocabularies and opinions are determined by historical circumstance, allows for the possibility that there may not be enough overlap between [groups] ... to make possible agreement about political topics, or even profitable discussion of such topics” (Rorty 1988: 269). Rorty argues that this does not, however, lead him directly to an ethnocentric position, rather, it leads him firstly to “anti-anti ethnocentrism” (Rorty 1991c). His biggest concern is not ethnocentrism, but the wishy-washy anti ethnocentrism of ‘wet’ liberals who “have become so open-minded that ... [their] brains have fallen out” (Rorty 1991c: 203). Their problem is that they fail to realise that they cannot get out of being a liberal just by being open-minded. Indeed, it is, according to Rorty, liberalism that allows ‘wet’ liberals to be open-minded in the first place. Thus, for Rorty, anti-anti ethnocentric liberals have nothing to apologise for: “They should simply drop the distinction between rational judgement and cultural bias” and become ‘connoisseurs’ of diversity (Rorty 1991c: 207-208).

²⁶⁶ He cites Nietzsche and Loyola as examples of such ‘fanatical’ enemies (Rorty 1988: 268-269).

Rorty has argued that it is not necessary to have a Philosophy underpinning liberal democracy and, that Philosophy may make the defence of liberal democracy more difficult. He also provides a moral argument about why liberal democracy as he has portrayed it, may be a 'good thing' and, in so doing, he presents an argument as to the means by which liberal democracies ensure their survival. This, you will recall, is the basis for 'realisation'. There is, Rorty argues, a "moral purpose" in the "light-minded aestheticism" and "superficiality" (Rorty 1988: 271-272) of his anti-philosophy of democracy:

[S]uch philosophical superficiality and light-mindedness helps along the disenchantment of the world. It helps make the world's inhabitants more pragmatic, more tolerant, more liberal, more receptive to the appeal of instrumental rationality.

If one's moral identity consists in being a citizen of a liberal polity, then to encourage light-mindedness will serve one's moral purposes. Moral commitment, after all, does not require taking seriously all the matters that are, for moral reasons, taken seriously by one's fellow citizens. It may require just the opposite. It may require trying to josh them out of the habit of taking those topics so seriously. There may be serious reasons for so joshing them (Rorty 1988: 272).

Anti-philosophical liberal democracy is, thus, a 'good thing' in that it encourages the conditions in which such democracy may continue. It helps it reproduce and, therefore, *realise* itself. Liberal democracy produces the conditions in which liberal "ironists", that is, people who face "up to the contingency of [their] ... most central beliefs and desires - someone sufficiently historicist and nominalist to have abandoned the idea that those central beliefs and desires refer back to something beyond the reach of time and chance" (Rorty 1989: xv) will flourish. If that is utopian, Rorty is happy to accept the label (Rorty 1989: xv-xvi).

While there is much that could be said about Rorty's notion of anti-philosophical liberal democracy, its significance for this thesis boils down to a couple of points. Firstly there is the methodological leap of faith performed by Rorty each time he uses the collective noun 'we' to describe his audience and his relation with them. Secondly, there are some startling issues that emerge in relation to the issue of the purpose of democratic theory, or Philosophy, to use Rorty's term.

The issue of Rorty's 'we' is a thorny one. Sheldon Wolin argues that Rorty:

celebrates its [the American community's] closeness as a certain whiteness that makes the community the source of moral judgements and the arbiter of morality: 'we don't do that' is for Rorty the equivalent of a basic norm. Morality is not a question of rules but of who 'we' are and what we might become (Wolin 1990: 11-12).

For Wolin, this statement constitutes a criticism, but it is one that Rorty would not find threatening. It is certainly true that Rorty heavily relies on dichotomies as the foundation of his anti-philosophical methodology, particular the 'we' - 'them' division. Bernstein, among others,²⁶⁷ has commented upon this, asking the question: just who is this 'we' to which Rorty refers?²⁶⁸ Rorty himself has been rather slippery on this subject, referring over the course of his writings to a range of 'we-s' including: "'we liberals', 'we pragmatists', 'we inheritors of European civilisation'" (Bernstein 1987: 553-554), as well as "we Deweyans" (Rorty 1991d: 212), we "postmodern bourgeois liberals" (Rorty 1991d: 200-201) and, most intriguingly, "we social democrats" (Rorty 1987: 566).

In appealing to 'we', Rorty is being consistent with his argument that, in the absence of Philosophical and moral absolutes, all that can be relied upon are the linguistically grounded shared norms and culture that bind communities together. He comes closest to defining his 'we' in his paper "Thugs and Theorists" (Rorty 1987), arguing that he intends 'we' to refer to "liberals" and "social democrats" such as Bernstein, "Rawls, Habermas, Berlin, Robert Bellah, Daniel Bell, Irving Howe, Sidney Hook, John Dunn, Charles Taylor" who share with him a number of intellectual beliefs (Rorty 1987: 565-567) and, in contrast to "radicals like Althusser, E. P. Thompson, Christopher Norris, Martin Fisk, Fred Jameson" (Rorty 1987: 567-568) who do not. The 'radicals' "find Marxist terminology

²⁶⁷ See also: Comay (1986), Connolly (1983), Lentricchia (1983) and Moussa (1991).

²⁶⁸ Bernstein (1987: 547-550 and 553-554).

more useful than we do, and ... do not discuss Soviet imperialism much”, preferring to focus on the:

evils internal to the First World. ... Whereas [we] liberals think of these evils as eventually reformable, radicals are concerned to show that they are somehow ‘integral’ to liberal society. Whereas [we] liberals think of the First World democracies as promising experimental *bricolages*, radicals think of them as concealing (probably irreparable) ‘structural’ defects, defects that theorising can detect and illuminate (Rorty 1987: 568).

The ‘liberals’ and ‘social democrats’, therefore, are First World academics who fall along an ideological continuum, particularly on the usefulness of theory, but who share a common culture that is “worried less about ideological purity, and have relied on what Rawls calls ‘overlapping consensus’” (Rorty 1987: 573).

This consensus forms an academic ‘utopia’, in which what matters most is:

equal access to a free press, a free judiciary, and free universities ... Differences in philosophical taste between us social democrats can easily be deferred until we have come a good deal closer to that utopia (Rorty 1987: 573).

Rorty’s ‘we’ is, as we have seen, methodologically vital to his argument. His arguments are fundamentally about ‘us’, and how ‘we’ should think about ourselves. We, rather than Protagoras’ ‘man’, are the measure of ourselves. As noted in Feyerabend’s theory of relativist democracy, this position is extremely weak because it is vulnerable to the opting out of Rorty’s ‘we’ by the members he includes within it. The one person who will not opt out of the utopia is Rorty himself. When he says ‘we’, he really means: ‘I and, I dare to hope, you too’. Democracy in such a scheme is as vulnerable as it was imagined to be by the Republicans, it is ultimately an “experiment in cooperation” between ‘us’ (Rorty 1988: 274) and nothing more.

The second issue to emerge from Rorty’s arguments relates to the purpose of democratic theory, or Philosophy, to use Rorty’s term. Rorty is somewhat inconsistent in the way he approaches Philosophy and democracy. On the one hand, he has, as we have seen, characterised Philosophy as useless and irrelevant to matters of politics such as democracy. On the other hand, he has

acknowledged that some 'social democrats' find Philosophy useful "in thinking through our utopian visions" (Rorty 1987: 569). Indeed, at one stage he characterises himself as a theorist, although perhaps not as a Philosopher (Rorty 1987: 574). According to Rorty, Philosophy is not worthless; however, it should not be expected to have political significance. Rather, it should be seen "as, roughly, a branch of literature", which may, or may not, have relevance to current political practice (Rorty 1987: 572).

If, as posited above, Philosophy is best regarded as an aesthetic exercise, it seems strange that Rorty should use philosophical devices to dismiss certain forms of democratic theory. Yet this is what he does. In a classically liberal strategy, Rorty uses the realisation of liberal democracy as an argumentative device for marginalising leftist theories of democracy, such as the communitarians discussed in Chapter Three, and the postmodernists discussed later in this chapter. They are, he says, "terminally wistful" (Rorty 1988: 272). His choice of words is very deliberate. It represents, in a phrase, the *loss of faith* that surrounds such theories. If we extend this line of thinking, critics of liberalism who retain a faith in the realisation of their form of democracy, such as the socialists discussed in the last chapter, could be described not as 'wistful', but as *wishful*, or perhaps pleasantly deluded. Critics of liberalism, however, who cannot find a universal basis for faith in the realisation of their form of democracy are, in Rorty's mind, left in the arid domain of wishing for something that they cannot *believe* will ever be realised. A person who holds such views could remain merely *wistful* or descend into pessimism.

Rorty's dismissal of communitarians and leftist postmodernists as 'wistful' has curious implications. The logic of his word choice, if it is to be the criticism he intends it to be, is that these theorists *should* be more 'realistic'. They should be like him and recognise that liberal democracy is real and desirable. Liberal democracy is how 'we' live. Instead, they are 'wistful', because they have no

basis for believing that their utopia will ever be realised. Of course, 'wistful' democratic theory is only undermined by this argument if it aspires to a function or use in affecting political activity. Rorty, here, is using the Left's article of faith that theory is relevant to politics as a weapon against it; despite his having also argued that such theory could be seen as a (sometimes) politically relevant form of literature. In other words, if the 'wistful' theorists of non-liberal democracy stopped believing that their theories were vital to democratic political practices, then Rorty's criticisms would be powerless.

The lesson we can draw from Feyerabend's and Rorty's theories of democracy is that they hold the whip hand when it comes to realising their theories. For both Feyerabend and Rorty, democracy has been realised. It is part of their conceptual landscape, as it were. They do not need to theorise the realisation of their theories in any detail, because it is unnecessary. Further, they do not need to try hard to justify their view of what democracy is, because, *as a matter of theory*, the community that would produce the standards for such judgement is the same community that supports existing democracy.²⁶⁹ Not only that, it is arguable whether 'justification', a philosophical concept if ever there were one, is appropriate to a community that does not need philosophy.

Is this rejection of the ideal and turn toward the 'real', to liberal democracy, the only possible consequence of doubting the existence of universal truths? The answer, clearly, is no, if the number of leftist postmodern theorists of democracy is any guide. It remains to be seen, however, whether such theorists can build a convincing theoretical edifice without the traditional foundation of the yet-to-be-realised *true* democracy. John Keane and Chantal Mouffe both attempt this, and, as we will see, they replicate the approaches taken by socialists discussed in the

²⁶⁹ Feyerabend and Rorty do not provide empirical evidence that existing liberal democratic communities support the prevailing system; it is merely assumed that this is the case.

previous chapter. Keane and Mouffe share with Rorty and Feyerabend the belief that democracy does not require a universal theoretical foundation. Unlike the liberal relativist and postmodernist we have just examined, however, Keane and Mouffe hold that such a position is compatible with a theory of democracy that extends beyond liberalism. Their arguments contain mixed messages about the realisation of democracy.

Keane's anti-ideological relativist democracy

John Keane has attempted to develop a leftist notion of 'relativist' democracy. As we will see, this notion contains a clear theoretical picture of its realisation. Keane's argument appears ultimately to rest on the social democratic assumptions that democracy is a means for achieving political transformation, and that 'democracy' can be understood primarily in terms of the liberal institutional model. In doing so, however, Keane appears to undermine his claims to 'relativism', by turning to universalist statements about the nature and justification of 'true' democracy. This illustrates most clearly the dilemma facing leftist postmodern and relativist theorists, namely, that it is very hard to theorise the realisation of something that does not already exist, without appealing to some universal basis for it, and for its desirability and achievability.

Keane's argument is that the *spirit* of Marx's critique of ideology can be rescued from its critics, and its *content* reconstructed, to form the theoretical underpinnings of a notion of relativistic democracy. According to Keane, Marx took the eighteenth century French concept of 'ideology', which was intended to destroy traditional prejudices and replace them with empirical-analytic *civisme*, and used it to expose the power claims of the bourgeoisie (Keane 1988: 214).

Ideology meant:

the collectively expressed ideas of the bourgeoisie - which rules civil society and therefore controls the state. ... An ideology is a special formation of ideas. It comprises dominant and dominating ideas, which function - though never fully successfully - to render the power relations of civil society invisible and, thus to insulate them from public questioning and social and political action. Bourgeois

ideology serves to conceal and 'freeze' social divisions. ... It performs this legitimating function, paradoxically, by portraying the dominant private interests of civil society in grandiose form, actions which make them appear, falsely, as detached and universal interests [such as] ... universal justice and liberty, and to guarantee individuality and the rights of man (Keane 1988: 214).

The notion of ideology, as used by Marx, was a powerful analytical and political tool for critiquing bourgeois social and political relations. Democracy could be used as a socialist tool to expose bourgeois ideology through the articulation of alternative ideas and exposing the operations of political power. As Keane notes, however, the idea of ideology as originally used by Marx suffered from a number of flaws. He argues the merit of the "dismantling and reassembly [of ideology] in a new form, so as to realise its original democratic potential" (Keane 1988: 224-225), rather than abandoning its idea.

Keane argues that the weaknesses of the original formulation of the notion of ideology include Marx's positivism, which is most obvious in his exclusion of the natural sciences from the notion of ideology. This enabled Engels, in particular,²⁷⁰ to locate socialism itself as being outside the realm of ideology, and within the realm of truth and rationality (see Keane 1988: 219- 221 and 228-229). In keeping with Feyerabend, Rorty and Mouffe, Keane doubts the possibility of 'true' knowledge, and asks:

whether a revised theory of ideology can remain critical whilst breaking with its positivist heritage, restraining itself from making absolute truth claims, and acknowledging its historicity, its embeddedness within a contingent sociopolitical context (Keane 1988: 228).

Keane believes he has devised a theory of ideology that is not positivist but, rather, is relativist. To achieve this, he turns to the linguistic relativism of Jean-François Lyotard, who he says argues that:

ideology is not a form of posthumous misrepresentation of a prior reality ... Ideology operates *within* language games and is therefore a constitutive feature of the social and political domains it inhabits. ...

²⁷⁰ See for example: Engels (1986).

[Ideology is] a particular type of (potentially) hegemonic language game which functions, not always successfully, to mask the conditions of its own engendering as well as stifle the pluralism of language games within the established socio-political order of which it is an aspect (Keane 1988: 234).

From this can be formed the basis of a new critique of ideology that avoids the totalising claims of the Marxist critique and, at the same time, avoids the relativist's Protagorean self-contradiction (holding two incompatible things to be true at the same time) by not claiming to be the one truth (Keane 1988: 235). It is merely another of the language games. Keane then claims that to:

criticise ideology in this revised way would be to emphasise that there is an inverse, but nevertheless intimate, relationship between ideology and democracy: to tolerate ideology is to stifle and potentially undermine the very plurality of language games upon which both the critique of ideology and democracy survive (Keane 1988: 235).

Keane admits to 'extending' the arguments of ethical relativists such as Lyotard. He notes that "relativists seem deeply reticent about developing the social and political connotations of their relativism" (Keane 1988: 235). The works of these relativists (and postmodernists) are "amorphous and pre-political"²⁷¹ and often "solipsistic", both of which are disturbing and have "preposterous" implications (Keane 1988: 236). These implications include the end of the grand narrative, which we would find in Lyotard and Baudrillard and, the 'withering away of power and conflict' (Keane 1988: 236).

Keane gives his relativist democracy a leftist edge when he says, that any ideology with its *truth*, is the "enemy of democracy":

To defend democracy against these and other ideologies is to welcome indeterminacy, controversy and uncertainty. It is to fight in the open, and with 'generous anger' (Orwell), against every arrogant orthodoxy which contends for the souls of citizens within civil society and the state. It is to be prepared for the emergence of the unexpected, and for the possibility of creating the new. *It is to recognise the need for continuing the modern process of*

²⁷¹ The argument is in itself somewhat dubious for a 'relativist' to take. Criticising a postmodernist for not looking for a *telos* in political behaviour is strange, given that the whole point of the postmodern approach to politics is to undermine the totalising nature of teleological analyses.

democratization which remains incomplete, highly vulnerable, and today threatened by a world heaving with an assortment of old and new anti-democratic trends (Keane 1988: 241 - my emphasis).

For Keane, democracy has a transformative *purpose*, it is linked implicitly to *progress* and the continuance of the project of modernity. This gives Keane the basis of a justification and argument about the realisation of relativist democracy, but only in very specific terms. Relativist democracy, following this argument, is justified *because* it generates the conditions for its survival against anti-democratic forces. In other words, Keane's relativist democracy is justified by its realisation.²⁷²

What does Keane mean by such anti-ideological relativist democracy? Not only does Keane justify such democracy in terms of its realisation, he, like Mouffe below, defines it in terms of its realisation. Keane, however, is much clearer on how and where this will occur. Essentially, Keane's anti-ideological relativist democracy is realised through the familiar institutions of liberal, pluralist democracy. It is to be understood in terms of the "institutional arrangements and procedures which guarantee that protagonists of similar or different forms of language games can openly and continuously articulate their respective forms of life" (Keane 1988: 237). To realise this, there is a need for strong political mechanisms: "Citizens living together under democratic conditions are obliged to submit themselves to political authority, without which they would fall into confusion and disorder" (Keane 1988: 237) With strong echoes of the liberal theoretical approach to the realisation of democracy through its institutional containment, Keane turns to two devices to realise democracy. Firstly, there must be an electorally accountable Legislative Assembly, that acts as a check on centralisation of political power and, secondly, civil associations

²⁷² This is a re-statement of the naturalistic fallacy that we have seen emerge a few times already in this thesis however, for a relativist, this is not so much a 'fallacy' as a statement of reality.

must be encouraged to grow. Like pluralists, both liberal and socialist, Keane argues that such civil associations: “nurture and powerfully deepen the local and particular freedoms so necessary for resisting the growth of ideologies, actively expressing particular interests and securing complex freedom and equality among individuals and groups” (Keane 1988: 238). This vision of the realisation of democracy through liberal democratic institutions, is strikingly similar to the ‘socialist pluralism’ of many social-democratic theorists discussed in Chapter Five, expressed, perhaps, with a Habermasian turn of phrase.

Keane suggests that his definition of democracy recognises its ‘essentially contested quality’, a quality which cannot be resolved because the search for unitary truth has been abandoned. Instead, ‘democracy’ is permanently contested, which, paradoxically, he argues presupposes the existence of a democratic environment (Keane 1988: 238). This is why we can say that Keane defines democracy in terms of its realisation through a series of now familiar institutional structures. The fact that these institutional structures exist in liberal democracies, to a greater or lesser degree, means that Keane can sidestep theorising their realisation in any great detail. Keane is clear about the realisation of his theory, because he has adopted already realised institutions into it.

At the beginning of this section it was noted that Keane’s clarity about the realisation of his notion of relativist democracy carries with it a turn away from the relativist rejection of universal truth claims. While not wanting to explore this too deeply, we see evidence of this in a number of ways. Firstly, as we have just seen above, there is his statement that democracy is ‘essentially contested’. In order that democracy is so contested, it must have an ‘essence’ or universal quality, even if no-one can agree on the exact nature of that essence.²⁷³ Secondly,

²⁷³ On ‘essentially contested concepts’, see: Gallie (1955-56), and Mason (1990).

despite eschewing universal claims to truth, Keane reserves a special place for democracy outside the relativist schema. Keane claims that:

democracy cannot be interpreted as merely one language game among others, as if particular groups struggling to defend or realise their particular language games could decide self-consistently to conform to democratic arrangements for a time, only to later abandon them. On the contrary, their rejection of democracy would constitute a lapse into ideology - it would evidently contradict the particularity of their own language games (Keane 1988: 239).

Keane appears to be replicating Marx's positivism in relation to science with a similar move in relation to democracy. Surely a relativist, drawing on Lyotard's notion of language games, cannot pick and choose which items to include and which not to include in the game, because the *game is all there is*. Keane's position, on the other hand, appears to be that anti-ideological relativist democracy must constitute the means by which this game is played out. However, this is the kind of universal truth claim that relativism disavows.²⁷⁴

Finally, it is questionable whether the relativist position is compatible with the social democratic *faith* in the transformative power of democracy that Keane appears to accept. Relativism and postmodernism are not tools by which one can easily envisage a 'promised land' that is not yet accepted by the democratic community as desirable. If the community is the source of standards by which to judge the merit of theories, then Keane has to rely on the standards of the liberal democratic community. It is a leap of faith, indeed, to expect that the community will harbour socially transformative ambitions. In attempting to give relativist democracy a realisable quality Keane, it appears, is ultimately forced to return to

²⁷⁴ As an aside, it is interesting to note that while Keane vigorously attacks 'end of ideology' theses, his whole project is geared towards ending up with his own 'end of ideology' program in the form of a reconstituted democracy which 'will not tolerate' ideologies (Keane 1988: 235). In contrast, both Feyerabend and Mouffe end up with a kind of inclusive pluralism, because to them toleration is the key to relativism and democracy. Keane's relativism is neither the 'robust' relativism of Rorty, nor Feyerabend's more relational concept but, rather, is a far more idiosyncratic project whereby relativism is applied only to those categories of ideas deemed to fall within the realm of 'ideology'.

the safety of the Archimedean theoretical point from which to determine the purpose and 'true' form of democracy.

Mouffe's radical 'plastic' democracy

Chantal Mouffe provides us with an excellent counterpoint to Rorty's vigorous defence of 'postmodern' liberal democracy and Keane's relativist social democracy. Her reading of the consequences of postmodernism for democratic theory confirms the malleability and vulnerability of such an approach. We find in Mouffe's work a great tension between, on the one hand, the postmodern attitude of critique, play and a rejection of universals and, on the other, the impulse of most democratic critics of liberal democracy to try to define what democracy is *really* all about. Mouffe shows us that it is difficult, if not impossible, to reconcile anti-universalism, or 'anti-essentialism', to use her preferred term, with a theory of democracy, where that democracy has not been realised.

Mouffe starts with a rejection of essentialism, and goes on to argue that liberalism is essentialist. By extension, therefore, liberal democracy is also tainted with essentialism, thereby casting doubt on its validity. Having done this, Mouffe posits an alternative, desirable, non-essentialist notion of 'radical' democracy. This satisfies the first two criteria for democratic theory discussed earlier. On the issues of achievement and realisation, however, Mouffe is largely silent.

Mouffe acknowledges that Rorty's 'apology' for liberal democracy is one possible consequence of the postmodern abandonment of the idea that the political project of modernity "must be based on a specific form of rationality" (Mouffe 1988b: 32), oriented toward seeking 'truth'. Where Rorty goes wrong, she argues, is in 'conflating' liberalism, capitalism and democracy in the defence of a modernity without Philosophy (Mouffe 1988b: 32).

Mouffe follows Macpherson's argument that liberalism and democracy are not synonymous but, rather, they are two parallel traditions or 'revolutions'. Neither is dependent on the other. Mouffe's strategy is to characterise the liberal revolution as bearing all that she dislikes about modernity: rationalism, dualism, the "abstract Enlightenment universalism of an undifferentiated human nature" (Mouffe 1988b: 35), as well as sexism,²⁷⁵ liberal rights, individualism, the "myth of the unitary subject", and, the "essentialist conception of a social totality" (Mouffe 1988b: 44). If we can only abandon our liberal fetters, she seems to be stating, we will be in possession of an uncluttered democratic revolutionary tradition, a 'radical and plural' democracy.

What is 'radical democracy', and how is it to be realised? In all her writings on the subject Mouffe freely discusses the first point, but consistently refuses to be pinned down of the second.²⁷⁶ Radical democracy is democratic not because it conforms to a universal standard, but because it is plastic. Radical democracy, in Mouffe's view, is about political space, responsiveness and specificity, rather than institutions and timeless values. It is characterised by "stable openness" (Keane 1988: 239). Mouffe's notion of democracy is built on a deliberate shift in perspective away from: firstly, the liberal preoccupation with institutions and their containment of democracy; secondly, the socialist double failing of totalitarianism and class reductionism in the Marxist tradition; and, thirdly, the now collapsing welfare state of social democracy (Mouffe 1988b: 31-32).

²⁷⁵ Mouffe endorses Pateman's statement that: "[t]he idea of universal citizenship is specifically modern [and liberal], and necessarily depends on the emergence of the view that all individuals are born free and equal, or are naturally free and equal to each other. ... We are taught that the 'individual' is a universal category that applies to anyone or everyone, but this is not the case. 'The individual' is a man" (Pateman cited in Mouffe (1988a); see also Pateman (1989) & (1988)).

²⁷⁶ See: Mouffe (1988a&b, 1991, 1992, 1993a&b, 1995). On Mouffe's notion of radical democracy, see also: Gibson-Graham (1995), Massey (1995), and Natter (1995).

As we saw in the last chapter, socialists have traditionally sought to define democracy in a way that serves their transformative goals. Mouffe tries to describe a democracy that is without set institutions, and without a pre-ordained ideological purpose. This is why her notion of radical democracy could be characterised by plasticity. Radical democracy is an environment that allows the maximum possibility for individuals to do political things as a collective (Mouffe 1988b: 42-44), be it direct or indirect, frequent or infrequent, on an issues basis or, following an ideological line. It is not for nothing that Mouffe occasionally adopts the notion of 'pluralism' to describe her theory (see Mouffe 1988b: 44). Mouffe argues that her notion of 'postmodern citizenship' is one that breaks down the homogeneous and universalist notions of the liberal citizen, leaving space for:

[d]emocratic politics ... [with] room for particularity and difference. ... Only a pluralistic conception of citizenship can accommodate the specificity and multiplicity of democratic demands and provide a pole of identification for a wide range of democratic forces. The political community has to be viewed, then, as a diverse collection of communities, as a forum for creating unity without denying specificity (Mouffe 1988b: 30-31).

Mouffe's rejection of essentialism and universal truths translates into a puzzling position on the question of the *purpose* of radical democracy, and by extension, its justification. How can Mouffe be sure that radical democracy will lead to, or be compatible with, a leftist political agenda? How can she possibly say that her project is:

a reformulation of the socialist project that avoids the twin pitfalls of Marxist socialism and social democracy, while providing the left with a new imaginary, an imaginary that speaks to the tradition of the great emancipatory struggles but also takes into account theoretical contributions by psychoanalysis and philosophy (Mouffe 1988b: 32-33)?

In a word, she cannot, except by defining socialism in terms compatible with her definition of radical democracy. This is what she has done:

In *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* we [Mouffe and Ernesto Laclau] attempted to redefine the socialist project in terms of 'radical and plural democracy' and to picture it as the extension of democracy to a wide range of social relationships. Our intention was to insist on the necessity of articulating socialist goals with the institutions of political liberalism. I am convinced that the only socialism with a future is a liberal socialism (Mouffe 1993a: 81).

This is an extraordinary admission. Socialism is re-defined in terms of radical democracy, and liberalism.²⁷⁷ It is merely a product of democracy extended to social relations. Socialism, therefore, has no meaning of itself, except that which is accorded to it by its relation to democracy.

Despite relegating socialism to being merely a form of democracy, Mouffe retains the socialist mood of optimism in relation to change. It would appear obvious that there could be no guarantee that the result of radical democracy extended to social relations would be the kind of leftist agenda she assumes it to be. Yet, Mouffe does not countenance this possibility, talking instead of alliances between those pursuing “antiracism, antisexism and anticapitalism” (Mouffe 1988b: 42), as if these were the only possible sorts of political agendas that would arise.

In pursuing her notion of radical democracy, Mouffe leaves clues as to how she sees its realisation. She describes radical democracy as a response of politics to the antagonisms of the political. The latter she says is the “dimension of antagonism that is inherent in all human society”, whereas politics is the “ensemble of practices, discourses and institutions which seek to establish a certain order” in society by containing the conflict produced by the political (Mouffe 1995: 262-263). Politics, thus, ‘domesticates hostility’ (Mouffe 1995: 263). In the context of this thesis, liberals in this model seek to prioritise politics over the political by divorcing it from the political, whereas socialists try to do the reverse by prioritising the antagonisms of the political (ie of civil society) over the mere formality of liberal democratic politics. Mouffe’s ‘radical democracy’ is an attempt to link the two: to accept that the antagonisms of the political are inevitable and, to accept that politics is a way of mediating these antagonisms:

²⁷⁷ In some arguments she goes further, to redefine socialism in terms of liberalism (see Mouffe 1993a: 85-87).

“what is at stake is how to establish this ‘us-them’ discrimination in a way that is compatible with pluralist democracy” (Mouffe 1995: 263).

Rorty, as we have seen, divides his conceptual world between ‘we liberals’ and ‘them’, the enemies of liberalism who we need not even speak to, let alone take seriously. Mouffe cannot afford such exclusivity, as a central plank of her theory is a rejection of dichotomous thought. Instead she recasts ‘them’, not as enemies, but as ‘adversaries’: “somebody with whose ideas we are going to struggle, but whose right to defend those ideas we will not put into question” (Mouffe 1995: 263). Radical democracy then becomes ‘agonal’, or a dramatic conflict, as opposed to ‘antagonistic’:

The prime task of democratic politics is not to eliminate the passions, not to regulate them to the private sphere in order to render rational consensus possible, but to mobilise these passions in a way that promotes democratic designs. Far from jeopardising democracy, agonistic confrontation is in fact its very condition for existence (Mouffe 1995: 263).

The above quotation leads us into considerations of how Mouffe theorises the realisation of radical democracy. ‘Passions’ are to be ‘mobilised’ to create the conditions for democracy’s realisation. This, of course, is an interesting twist on the problematic position of the passions discussed earlier in this thesis. In Classical, and republican thought, it was the actions of a person that were the site of democracy’s impossibility (Classical) and realisation (republican). The passions were a problematic vehicle, with Rousseau providing some argument for their role as well. For Mouffe, however, it appears that it is the passions that are the key to radical democracy’s realisation.

Mouffe’s use of the word ‘mobilisation’ has interesting connotations. ‘Mobilisation’ of the passions implies not only the Classical and republican sense of control or management of the passions, to a particular end, but it also implies the enhancement of the passions. Unfortunately, there are few clear descriptions

in Mouffe's work as to how this mobilisation of the passions will, or may, occur. References are made to the power of 'tradition', ethics,²⁷⁸ democratic values, and institutions,²⁷⁹ without providing much in the way of deep analysis. Instead, her work skims over these notions, as *possible* ways in which radical democracy may be realised, but does not linger long enough to consider in any detail how these may be generated, whether they will work in the way intended and, whether they will necessarily support a leftist political outcome for radical democracy in practice.

We see some further prototypical moves toward theorising the realisation of radical democracy, when Mouffe talks of the need for a 'deepening' of the democratic revolution. To enable this to occur, it will be necessary to 'shape' the:

identity of different groups, so that the demands of each group can be articulated with those of others according to the principle of democratic equivalence (Mouffe 1988b: 42).

²⁷⁸ Despite Mouffe not personally engaging with the ethical possibilities of French postmodernism, there is plenty of material available in this area, particularly in relation to the works of Luce Irigaray, Emmanuel Levinas and Michel Foucault. Levinas' work revolves around two issues, namely alterity (Otherness), and responsibility. Levinas describes his understanding of ethics as the "structure as the one-for-the-other" (Levinas 1987: 165 footnote 16), or more commonly, it is described as the responsibility for the Other (see: Levinas (1987) (1988), (1989a), (1989b), and (1991). On Levinas' notion of ethics, see also: Bernasconi & Critchley (1991), Bernasconi & Wood (1988), Chalier (1991), Ciaramelli (1991), Cohen (1986), Gibbs (1991), Grosz (1987), Hand (1989), Vasey (1992), and Peperzak (1991).

Irigaray has developed an ethical theory of alterity from her early psycho-analytic works, and through her later philosophico-linguistic analysis of the construction of 'irreducible' sexual difference. This work has explored the possibility of seeing the woman/feminine as a 'true' other, as it were, in an ethical relationship of alterity typified by 'wonder'. See: Irigaray (1977), (1980), (1981), (1983), (1985), (1986), (1989a), (1989b), and (1991). On Irigaray's notion of sexual ethics, see: Bartkowski, (1986), Berg (1988), Braidotti (1986a & 1986b), Burke (1980), Gatens (1989), Gross (1986a & 1986b), Grosz (1988), Whitford (1991), Schor (1989), and Martindale (1987).

Foucault's 'ethic of the care of the self', is perhaps better known than the ethical work of Levinas and Irigaray. Unlike the other two philosophers, Foucault's late ethical interest focussed on the self's relationship with the self. Deriving from his interest in the history of sexuality, this self-relationship is deeply imbued with cultural values and 'techniques' of the self. The ethics of the self are about the self constituting itself by relations of domination and control. See: Foucault (1981), (1982-1983), (1988a), (1988b), (1990), (1991a), and (1991b). On Foucault's notion of ethics see: Davidson (1986), Harpham (1988), Kelly (1990), Kritzman (1985), Martin (1988), Moussa (1992), Rajchman (1986), and Scott (1990).

Jacques Derrida's contribution is sometimes cited as a transition point between Foucault's self-centred ethics, and Levinas' other-centred notion. See Derrida (1988) and (1992). See also, for example: Bell (1992), Critchley (1992), Hoy (1993), Martin (1992) and Dastur (1992).

²⁷⁹ See: Mouffe (1993a: 86-87), (1995: 262-265), and especially (1988b: 38-44).

Just how this shaping will occur is not discussed; instead, Mouffe immediately turns to the outcomes of this shaping process. To uphold ‘democratic equivalence’ Mouffe turns to a modified version of liberal rights theory. In her view, these ‘democratic rights’, such as liberty and citizenship, belong “to the individual [but] can only be exercised collectively and presuppose the existence of equal rights for others” (Mouffe 1988b: 42). In this way, community values and traditions may be protected from radical individualism masquerading as democratic activity (see Mouffe 1988b: 41 and 44).

In being unclear about the realisation of her theory, Mouffe is in good theoretical company. Marx, you will recall, left open the issue of the form to be taken by socialism and the means by which it would be achieved, arguing that the particularities of the circumstances would guide the transition. Hirst identifies the parallel in Mouffe’s work with Marx’s approach, but is unhappy with the ‘conceptual vagueness’ it implies (Hirst 1990a: 161),²⁸⁰ while Keane has described her work as “prepolitical” (Keane 1988: 235).

It seems that in Mouffe, like the socialists discussed in the previous chapter who give a high relative value to democracy, the issue of realisation is left under-explored. To a certain extent, this is a consequence of the definition of democracy that is used. Mouffe’s radical democracy is defined by a condition, that is plasticity, and not by a set of institutions (liberalism) or the universal goal of the good society (republicanism and socialism). Such ‘plastic’ relations could arise anywhere, at any time and in any circumstance. By defining democracy in this way, Mouffe is mirroring the move made by Pateman and Habermas. Pateman and Habermas, you will recall, conflate the achievement and realisation

²⁸⁰ Hirst also describes Mouffe’s theory as “new republican” (Hirst 1990a: 160-165), which seems rather implausible, given her general optimism and commitment to a form of socialism. Mouffe herself notes that while republicanism has its appeal, it is unable to meet the modern demand “that we abandon the idea of a unique constitutive space of the constitution of the political, which is particular to both liberalism and civic republicanism” (Mouffe 1988b: 43-44).

of democracy, arguing that in achieving ‘democracy’ the conditions for its realisation are also produced. By defining radical democracy as the condition of plasticity, Mouffe seems to be implying that any interaction based on ‘democratic equivalence’ creates the conditions for its replication. In other words, radical democracy has realisation built into its open-endedness. It is realisable by definition, but this realisation is, apparently, not theorisable.

Conclusion

The preceding discussion has shown how fluid democratic theory becomes when the notion of the universal truth claim about the nature of democracy is set aside. The meaning, value and means of realisation of democracy become relative to the community it serves. We have seen in the examples of Feyerabend and Rorty that theorising the realisation of democracy is unnecessary if one accepts that existing liberal democratic institutions are ‘democratic’. In this, their position is not dissimilar to many recent liberal democratic theorists.²⁸¹ Not only is it unnecessary to theorise the realisation of democracy, it is *pointless* even to try; because meaningful ‘theory’ will only ever be an extension of existing community values. In the case of Keane, the issue of theorising the realisation of democracy is sidestepped, in much the same way as it is done by social democrats. Liberal democracy’s institutions, it is assumed, are sufficient and capable of achieving Keane’s goals. For Mouffe, there is a consistent and probably necessary refusal to explore the issue of realisation in any detail, for fear of limiting its possibilities. In this, her position is rather like that of Pateman and Habermas.

The example of the theorists discussed in this chapter illustrates a number of points about the nexus between the realisation of democracy in democratic theory,

²⁸¹ And for that matter many social democratic theorists. Feyerabend and Rorty, however, could not countenance the universalist faith in the inevitability of socialism held by social democrats.

and its realisation in practice. In previous chapters, we have seen how the history of republican, liberal and socialist democratic theory contains a constant search for a 'formula' for realising 'true' or 'realistic' democracy. This formula is most explicit in republican theories of the means by which to realise the good democratic republic through the creation of the virtuous citizenry. In liberal theory, the formula is found in institutional design, whereby the institutional structures that contain democracy displace the need for virtue in citizens. In socialist theory, the formula is split amongst those who: defer the realisation of democracy until after the realisation of socialism and, thereby, dissolve the tensions that make democracy's realisation a 'problem' (Marx); those that sidestep theorising the realisation of democracy by accepting that existing liberal democracy is democracy, more or less (social democrats); and those who define 'true' democracy in a way that incorporates the realisation of democracy into its initial achievement, perhaps through socialisation (participatory theory), or through the very nature of democratic interactions themselves (discursive democracy).

If one accepts the relativist/postmodernist argument about the contingent nature of truth statements discussed in this chapter, then the kind of democratic theory discussed in previous chapters may indeed be *potentially* 'pointless'. As I stress in the previous sentence, the 'pointlessness' of democratic theory is neither necessary, nor inevitable. Further, one could question whether the charge of 'pointlessness' is really such a bad thing.

Many republicans, liberals and socialists would not accept that truth statements are contingent. Indeed, their simplest response would be to point out that the statement 'all truth is relative', is itself a universalist and, ultimately, Philosophical position. It is, as Feyerabend noted, a statement of *belief*. It is also, as we have seen in this chapter, a statement that gives the theoretical whip hand to those who favour the status quo. It is easy to defend relativist democracy, for

example, if it corresponds exactly with existing democracy. If one accepts that the community's values are expressed in its institutions, this would suggest that existing democracy, is 'democracy'. It is very hard to defend, or indeed even describe, a relativist democracy that does not yet exist, without appealing to some timeless notion of 'true' democracy.

For the theorists of democracy discussed in the previous chapters, the relativist critique poses no great threat, because for them one of the goals of democratic theory is to outline how 'true', 'real' or 'realistic' democracy may be realised. In other words, there is an *essence*, a Platonic *form* of realised democracy as it were, which the task of theory is to uncover. The postmodern/relativist doubting of the *form* of realised democracy is potent only if one accepts this doubt.

As we have found in this chapter, 'postmodern' and 'relativist' democratic theorists (of any persuasion) must concede that the nexus between the realisation of democracy in democratic theory and, in democratic practice, is looser than many theorists in the past would have accepted. Some, such as Feyerabend and Rorty, would be comfortable with this suggestion, others, such as Keane and Mouffe, would be less so. In the context of this thesis, however, one is tempted to ask: what is so new about this position? To my mind, using the postmodern/relativist argument against the democratic theorists' quest to theorise the realisation of 'true' democracy, is akin to using a contemporary sledgehammer to crack an Ancient walnut. We don't need to go through the 'philosophy' of relativism to arrive at this position. History shows us this in a far more simple fashion.

Chapter Two showed us that from democracy's beginning there has been a distinction between the realisation of democracy in practice and in theory. Democracy was an invention of the politicians, independent of, and prior to, the philosophers. In fact, the philosophers never liked democracy, and bequeathed a critical legacy that echoes through to the current debates. Paradoxically, of

course, it is the ancient philosopher's language that later theorists took up in democracy's defence. The very simple lesson we can draw from history is that there is no great novelty, or indeed, potency, in the postmodern/relativist 'doubting the realised *form* of true democracy'. This is because the realisation of democracy was not a *form* to begin with. The philosopher's 'rules', including those of the postmodernists or relativists, simply do not apply. One does not need to destroy all truth claims to make democracy a thing realised and defined in practice. Indeed, theorising the destruction of universal truth claims does not change anything about democracy, all it does is open a *potential* challenge to the role of the democratic theorist.

If one does accept that there is no universal true form of realised democracy, does it follow that democratic theory is 'pointless', as charged by Rorty? Does it also mean that the democratic theorist is 'pointless'? By being 'pointless', I take it to mean that the theory, or the theorist, is irrelevant to the political practices of realised democracy. At one level, it seems that those on the Left of politics, in particular, are confronted by the fact that the more one pursues the line taken by the theorists discussed in this chapter, the more the place of the theorist in theorising democracy becomes problematic. If the meaning of democracy is to be understood as being relative to the community that claims it, then what is the role of the theorist? He or she cannot claim privileged insight into the nature of 'true' democracy and its realisation, because there is no 'true' democracy. All that he or she can do is put forward alternative visions for the democratic community to consider. Despite Keane and Mouffe's optimism, democracy cannot have a guaranteed transformative effect, nor can that effect be expected to lead necessarily in a 'progressive' direction. The theorist is reduced to being an 'ideas' man or woman - an intellectual *par excellence*.

Supporters of liberal democracy, such as Feyerabend and Rorty are in a different but similarly vulnerable position. They would argue that there is no

need to theorise the realisation of democracy, because it has already been realised. As a matter of empirical fact, however, it is quite possible that many members of existing liberal democracies, such as the USA, would not support the existing democratic political structures. This does not undermine Feyerabend and Rorty's theoretical point; it merely serves to emphasise the political purpose of their arguments. Feyerabend and Rorty may present their arguments as if they are a-theoretical but, in fact, this presentational technique is a *theoretical strategy* for marginalising other forms of democratic theory. The extension of this argument is that 'democratic theory' is rendered a conservative beast. Democratic theory is unlikely to be radical because it can only be theorised in terms of the values of the existing democratic community. Democratic theory would then be reduced to a narrow, incremental theoretical project, or the quasi-scientific theorising of behavioural political science. In the pragmatic liberal democratic world of Feyerabend and Rorty, the kind of democratic theorists found in the previous chapters do not need to be taken seriously.

Finally, one could question whether it matters if democratic theory is indeed 'pointless'. Presumably most of the theorists discussed in previous chapters would resent their work being deemed to be 'pointless' but, as we have seen, they have nothing to fear from postmodernism or relativism. Theorists who work within the paradigm of the search for 'true' democracy are, logically, invulnerable to relativist arguments because they are drawing on fundamentally different and incompatible systems of belief. The 'point' of their theories remains as strong as it ever was.

What about 'postmodern' democratic theorists? Should they care if what they are doing is deemed 'pointless'? They might choose to care, but only if they believe that the purpose of their intellectual endeavours is to change the world. One suspects that many of them would cope with being as 'pointless' as, say, an artist, musician, or philosopher. They may even wish to argue that being

'pointless' has positive connotations. A 'pointless' literature is, by definition, immune from the requirement that its subject matter be realised. No more could the democratic theorist be criticised for being unrealistic! Being 'pointless' frees the intellectual from the confines of the narrow pathways of normality and *Real Politik*, to step outside what is, and think about what might be. Ultimately, also, theorists such as Keane and Mouffe could simply argue that the 'pointlessness' charge is itself pointless, because their theories do not have the purpose changing the world. They could argue that what they are really doing is reversing Marx's famous dictum: "The philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point, however, is to change it" (Marx 1989f: 15). The 'point' of such postmodern democratic theory is not to change the world but to challenge the way the world is *thought about*. 'Pointless' postmodern and relativist democratic theory might not change the world by telling us how to realise true democracy, but may help us think about the world of realised democracy differently, particularly if that world itself changes.

CONCLUSION

This thesis has sought to rectify an area of neglect in the historiography of democratic theory. A core proposition of the thesis is that democratic theory requires four elements in order to be given the title. Firstly, it must *define* democracy; to tell us what ‘democracy’ means. Secondly, it must *justify* democracy; to tell us why it is a ‘good thing’. Thirdly, it must tell us how democracy will be *achieved*, if it has not already been achieved. Fourthly, it must tell us how the conditions for the survival of democracy will be created and replicated; that is, it must tell us about the *realisation* of democracy. It has been argued that the historiography of democratic theory has tended to dwell on the definition and justification of democracy in democratic theory, at the expense of the theoretical dimensions of democracy’s achievement and realisation. This thesis has focussed on the latter, by presenting a history and analysis of the idea of the realisation of democracy.

The realisation of democracy differs from its achievement in that the latter relates to the transition to democracy, whereas realisation is about rendering democracy permanent. As we have seen, the issue of democracy’s realisation is prominent in the historical sources of democratic theory, but is neglected in its recent historiography. In focussing on the issue of realisation in the various schools of democratic theory, this thesis is best viewed as an analysis of, and adjunct to, the existing histories of democratic theory, rather than a complete history in its own right.

In Chapter One, we examined the way in which the histories of democratic theory have been written, both in terms of their structure and intellectual context. We found that the history of the historiography of democratic theory is

comparatively brief and localised, originating primarily from Anglo-American sources since the Second World War. The authorship of these histories is limited to three main types: the 'primer'; the single author work; and, the edited collection. The content of these histories is arranged in two ways, either thematically or in terms of schools of thought.

It was argued that the structure and methodology of the histories of democratic theory reflect clear assumptions about the source material: either democracy is assumed to have some timeless meaning; or, its meaning is thought to be historically contingent. Further, it was noted that the historiographical literature appears to be engaged in debates larger than just the history of the idea of democracy; instead, 'democracy' often appears to be a unifying theme, in what really are histories of political thought. This tendency ultimately turns into an exercise comparing the definition and justification of democracy in the historical source material, at the expense of other aspects of it, particularly the issue of realisation.

Some possible reasons why the historiographical literature neglects the issue of realisation in democratic theory were advanced. We found that the neglect may be best explained, not as an accident, or merely a result of inevitable constraints upon space, but as a product, whether conscious or not, of the historians' postwar Anglo-American intellectual context. In this context, there is a tendency to expect that political theory and its histories, take a particular form and have a particular purpose; namely, to provide a normative theory to justify a vision of the 'good' society.

Subsequent chapters in this thesis were structured to examine the main schools of thought identified in the histories of democratic theory. Each chapter briefly summarised how the historians of democratic theory have written about the individual schools of democratic thought, and in so doing, showed how the issue of realisation is neglected in each case. The chapters then offered a detailed

account of how the historical authors theorised the realisation of their preferred notion of democracy. These accounts uncovered subtleties, commonalities and differences not treated in the historiographical literature.

Chapter Two addressed the issue of the realisation of democracy in the context of Ancient Greek thought. Unlike later chapters, Chapter Two did not draw out the issue of realisation in a particular school of democratic theory. This was because the Greeks did not bequeath to us a theory of democracy. They realised democracy *without* theorising its realisation. We found that the Greek legacy lies in inventing and recording 'democracy', and its ideals, in a hostile theoretical climate. Interestingly, this recording was done largely by the critics of democracy, for whom the realisation of democracy undermined the preconditions they thought were essential for a virtuous life. These preconditions were discovered to be very important, as they underpin many later theories of democracy.

This chapter found that it is precisely the preconditions identified by the Ancient critics of democracy that the historiographical literature fails to address. By focussing on the overtly political literature from the Ancient sources, in isolation from their ethical works, the historiographical literature fails to recognise the intrinsic link between matters of politics and matters of 'proper' public behaviour in Ancient Greek thought. The remainder of the chapter demonstrated this link, through an examination of the ethical writings of Plato and Aristotle. It was shown that issues of politics cannot be divorced from ethical considerations on proper, virtuous, public life. Such ethical behaviour, for the Ancient Greek writers, was to be realised through the a person's self-control of his or her actions, and perhaps 'passions'. The problem for Plato and Aristotle, was that democracy undermines the conditions for such virtuous self-control, thereby rendering it unrealisable.

Chapter Three examined the Renaissance revival of theoretical interest in the idea and practice of democracy that we collectively termed ‘republicanism’. We found that the historiographical literature tends not to differentiate republican theories of democracy from early liberal democratic theory. Further, we found no consideration of the issue of realisation in the historiographical literature’s account of these theories, despite republicanism being the school of democratic theory with, perhaps, the most forceful and vital theory of democracy’s realisation.

This chapter demonstrated that, for republicans, the method for realising democracy is contained in the theory of ‘civic virtue’. The example of Jean-Jacques Rousseau showed that while republicans borrow heavily from Ancient notions of the construction of civic virtue to theorise how democracy may be realised, they do so for modern reasons. Republicans, with their essentially conservative and pessimistic notion of inevitable, linear and unidirectional change, turn to civic virtue as a bulwark against institutional degeneration. Civic virtue is the means by which the democratic republic is realised. Civic virtue is produced by the individual constraining his or her public actions and, in the case of Rousseau, indirectly constraining his or her passions. We concluded our discussion of republican democratic theory with some reflections on contemporary communitarian ‘republicanism’, dwelling, in particular, on whether these ‘republicans’ give full consideration to the theoretical underpinnings of the republican notions of community and citizenship, and the ascetic theory of civic virtue.

In Chapter Four we examined the ways liberal democratic theory seeks to render democracy realisable through its institutional containment. We found that liberalism dominates the historiographical literature at a number of levels. The historiographical literature, it was argued, clearly articulates the liberal theory of democracy, in terms of definition and justification, but rarely considers the issue

of realisation. This is despite realisation being an issue of some difficulty for early liberal democrats, whose solutions remain embedded in later theories of liberal democratic practices, and in the literature on democratisation.

An examination of the works of James Mill and his son John Stuart Mill, gave us prototypical examples of two competing tendencies in liberal democratic thought, often described as 'protective' and 'developmental' respectively. These tendencies, while often quite distinct, share assumptions about democracy being realised through containment. Democracy in liberal democratic theory, it was argued, is realised through its containment to the status of a mediating device between civil society and government. This containment was found to exist in at least four dimensions, namely, the containment of: the behaviour of individual citizens by the government; the actions of government through the democratic process; the citizens' direct influence over the government; and, the citizens' influence over the political process.

Overall, therefore, we found that unlike republicanism, liberal democracy does not require virtue from its citizens, because its institutions are designed to create virtue-like outcomes. In liberal democratic theory, democracy can only be realised when government and the citizenry are institutionally protected from each other through a process of mutual containment. In order to be realised, democracy itself must be contained to the gap between civil society and government. Liberal democratic institutions, such as the representative system, provide the mechanisms by which the democratic containment arises and, thus, they ensure that liberal democracy is realised.

In Chapter Five, we concluded our examination of the major schools of democratic theory by examining the ways in which socialist democratic theory addresses the issue of democracy's realisation. It was found that the clarity that was a hallmark of the historiographical literature's account of liberal democratic theory, deserts it when it comes to socialism. The focus, it was argued, is not on

democracy in socialist thought, but on socialism itself, and the thought of Karl Marx in particular. As a consequence, we found that the issue of realisation is overlooked, as is the place of democracy in non-Marxist socialist theory.

The chapter examined the works of Karl Marx, as well as social democratic, 'Eurocommunist', 'participatory' and, 'discursive' socialist theories of democracy. It was shown that socialists are united by both a positive mood toward change and, on the whole, by a desire to break out of the liberal democratic containment of democracy, by re-connecting it to civil society in general, and economic relations in particular. Socialist theorists of democracy, it was argued, are divided over the priority given to the realisation of democracy, relative to the realisation of socialism.

The lower the level of priority given to the realisation of democracy relative to the realisation of socialism, the easier it becomes for socialists to defer theorising the realisation of democracy. We found, for example, that Karl Marx, particularly in his later works, could entertain a quite conventional, even liberal, notion of democracy, because democracy was to follow the realisation of socialism. Social democrats, it was noted, simply sidestep the issue of realising democracy, by assuming 'democracy' means existing liberal democratic institutions, and that these institutions are a vehicle for realising socialism. Conversely, democracy's realisation becomes a vital 'problem' to be theorised, in the works of Pateman and Habermas. These theorists present intriguing notions of democracy, the realisation of which, though under-explored, returns to the republican-like language of restraint and virtue in which democratic participation generates the conditions for democracy's survival. Socialist democracy for these theorists, therefore, realises itself.

In Chapter Two, it was noted that democracy was realised in Ancient Greece before it was theorised, and that later democratic theories have their roots in the theoretical legacy of democracy's ancient critics, rather than its supporters.

Chapters Three, Four and Five set out the issue of democracy's realisation in republicanism, liberalism and socialism respectively. Each of these schools of thought borrows, to a greater or lesser extent, from the ancient language of the first critics of democracy, but reverses the original intent of the language to theorise the realisation of democracy. In Chapter Six, we examined the nexus between the realisation of democracy in democratic theory, and the realisation of democracy in practice through the postmodern/relativist works of Paul Feyerabend, Richard Rorty, John Keane and Chantal Mouffe. We found that in shearing democracy off from the universal truth claims presupposed by most republicans, socialists, and to a lesser extent liberals, it becomes difficult to theorise the realisation of democracy, unless it has already been realised in practice. This means that supporters of the existing form of liberal democracy, such as Feyerabend and Rorty, occupy a theoretically powerful position, in which the theorisation of their preferred form of democracy is apparently rendered redundant, and the 'point' of theorising alternative notions of democracy is questioned. This places Keane and Mouffe in a difficult position as they attempt to theorise credibly the realisation of their form of democracy. This discussion raised some questions about the purpose of democratic theory itself, and the position of the democratic theorist.

Upon examination, however, these questions, were found to be less confronting than they first appeared, because they rest upon the acceptance, *on faith*, of the core propositions of relativism, and of the priority of democratic theory over practice. A rejection of one of these elements of postmodernist/relativist faith renders the position of the democratic theorist secure, if somewhat transformed, from his or her earlier incarnation.

With this thought, this thesis has come to an end. The arguments put have added to the historiography of democratic theory an element that has, until now, been neglected. As well as contributing to the completeness of the

historiographical literature, the thesis has been able to illustrate that while the various schools of democratic theory are each quite distinctive, there is a surprising overlap and cross-fertilisation between them when it comes to the issue of democracy's realisation. The result of this is to reinforce the need for democratic theorists, of all persuasions, as well as historians of democratic theory, to bear in mind democracy's historicity, and to recognise the theoretical importance of its realisation.

APPENDIX A

Philosophical and Psychological Research on

Enkrateia and Akrasia

There is a longstanding tendency, dating back at least to Aristotle, of philosophers focussing their attention on the ‘problem’ or vice of *akrasia*, or ‘weakness of will’, at the expense of its corresponding virtue, *enkrateia*, or ‘self-control’. This is a habit that persists in the current philosophical literature. In fact *enkrateia* does not seem to be as *philosophically* problematic as *akrasia*.²⁸² Philosophically oriented studies of *enkrateia* or self-control tend to focus on Greek or Christian social and religious practices.²⁸³

Enkrateia, or ‘self-control’ is widely discussed in behavioural/psychological literature. In the 1960s, at the height of American behavioural social science, self-control as an abstract concept, which had largely been the preserve of moral philosophers, became scrutinised as never before. Perhaps the best attempt to give an overview of the literature was a series of articles by Klausner et al, collated in a volume entitled: *The Quest for Self-Control: Classical Philosophers and Scientific Research*, (1965). Klausner offers a complex mapping of the literature by identifying eight “intellectual traditions” in which self-control has been used: yoga and religious mysticisms; philosophical writings; personality psychology; psychoanalysis; social psychology; stress studies; hypnosis; and

²⁸² On *akrasia* see for example: Bok (1980), Davidson (1969), Kennett & Smith (1992), Mele (1986a), Mele (1986b), Mele (1990), Rorty (1980a), Rorty (1980b), Rorty (1980c), Rorty (1983), Watson (1977).

²⁸³ See for example: Aronson (1984), Brown (1987), Brown (1988), Falk (1969), Giversen (1985), Gordon (1984), Hadas (1965), Inwood (1985), Mele (1985), Mennell (1987), Meyer (1989), Pagels (1988), Quispel (1985), Rouselle (1988), Schelling (1983), Schelling (1984 [1980]), Slotte (1986), Tully (1988), Turner (1982), Turner (1985), Wilson (1985).

popular self-help literature (Klausner 1965: 11). He suggests that there are four “manifest objects of control” (Klausner 1965: 14), or put more simply, the ‘things that are to be controlled’, found in the literature: control of physical performance; control of psychological or physiological drives; control of intellectual or cognitive functions; and, control of affects or emotions (Klausner 1965: 14-15). Further, there are three kinds of “controlling functions” which act upon the manifest object of control which can be categorised as: the will or reason as separate and different in kind from the controlled objects, acting as a ‘monarch’; the will or instinct as differing from the objects of control only in its executive function, acting as a ‘republican authority’; and, the will or motive as emergent from the patterning of the controlled objects, acting in a form of ‘primitive communism’ (Klausner 1965: 16-19). Finally he identifies four methods for effecting self-control: controlling the environment (“effort to synergy”); dominating the ‘bad’ or undesirable qualities by force of will or by habit (“effort to conquest”); getting in tune with one’s physical constitution and personality (“effort to harmony”); and, synthesising the action with threats against it (“effort to transcendence”) (Klausner 1965: 20-29).

While Klausner’s approach and those of Nelson and Dornsbusch, who follow similar strategies, may well provide a comprehensive overview of the literature, it is extremely complex and rather cumbersome. What they attempt to do is categorise what is controlled, in what manner, and by what method. Yet their attempts founder on the fact that self-control literature does not easily lend itself to such precise categorisation. Many works on self-control would fall across these boundaries, and even perhaps outside them. Indeed one wonders that perhaps Klausner did not fail in his stated aim of avoiding excessively psychological language and using “the classical or the more nearly generic terms” (Klausner 1965: 11), when one is confronted with “synergy”, “transcendence”, “controlling function”, and “manifest objects of control”.

However, there is a very real sense in which Klausner et al would be perfectly justified in using as much psychological and scientific language as they like. This is because, to all intents and purposes, 'self-control' is a term that has become the domain of the sciences of the psyche. Even the most cursory glance through the literature will indicate the dominance of psychology, psycho-analysis and the like, in the issue of self-control.²⁸⁴

²⁸⁴ A short survey produced: Ainslie (1988), Blanchard & Young (1973), Breitmeyer (1985), Bridgeman (1985), Caraco (1988), Danto (1985), Deecke (1987), Doty (1985), Eccles (1985), Eisenberger (1988), Engel (1973), Fantino & Preston (1988), Frederick & Barber (1973), Gordon (1989), Green & Fisher (1988), Heilbrun & Friedberg (1988), Hinson (1988), Hoffman & Kravitz (1987), Houston & McNamara (1988), Imada & Imada (1988), Jasper (1985), Jung (1985), Kanfer & Karoly (1973), Kanfer (1979), Kuhl (1988), Latta (1985), Lea & Tarpy (1990), Libet (1985a&b), Libet B (1987), Logue (1988a&b), Logue (1990), Lowe & Horne (1988), MacKay (1985), Mahoney & Thoresen (1974), Marks (1985), Mazur & Herrnstein (1988), Merikle & Cheesman (1985), Moore (1988), Mortensen (1985), Näätänen (1985), Navarick (1988), Nelson (1985), Oerter (1991), Oppenheimer (1991a&b), Patterson & Mischel (1976), Pomerleau & Pomerleau (1988), Premack & Anglin (1973), Ringo (1985), Rollman (1985), Rugg (1985), Scheerer (1985), Schwartz & Strack (1991), Shimoff & Catania (1988), Sonuga-Barke (1988), Stamm (1985), Timberlake (1988), Tversky & Griffin (1991), Underwood & Niemi (1985), Van Der Wilk (1991), Van Gulick (1985), Vanderwolf (1985), Veenhoven (1991), Wasserman (1985), Wegner & Schneider (1989), Wood (1985), Yamamura (1988), and Zeiler (1988).

APPENDIX B

The Meaning of Republican Liberty: Lessons from Recent Debates

In the discourse of recent republican thought, both communitarian and otherwise, there has been a shift from the earlier dialogue in a number of areas. One of these has been in terms of the meaning of republican liberty. In debating the meaning of the term, the issue that was more important to earlier republicans, namely, how liberty is created in a republic, has been clouded.

Liberty was always a concern for republicans, indeed it was a vital concern. What mattered was not so much the meaning of liberty, as this, Pettit assures us, was uncontroversial (Pettit 1990). Liberty was more important to republicans because of the way it was generated and secured. Republican liberty arose in a stable republic, a stable republic rested on civic virtue, and civic virtue arose from the self-imposed control of one's actions. Thus Rousseau could argue that self-control makes you truly free.

Recently, however, the debate has turned from the means by which liberty is to be secured, to the terms in which it should be described. There is no doubt that republicans subscribe to a fuller notion of liberty than that usually associated with liberalism (Haakonssen 1993: 571-572). This liberal notion of liberty is described as 'negative'. What is debated is the conventional view that republicans hold a 'positive' view of liberty.²⁸⁵ Pettit, in particular, argues that republican liberty is better understood as a special kind of negative liberty: 'resilient' liberty. This debate over positive and resilient negative liberty is, I believe, a good example of

²⁸⁵ Berlin's work on liberty (1984) underpins the contrast between positive and negative notions of liberty.

Shapiro's 'mutual opposition of gross concepts' in which terminology rather than consequences become the topic of debate.

The conventional view is to describe republican liberty as positive. Berlin argues that positive liberty "derives from the wish on the part of the individual to be his own master" (Berlin 1984: 22). This clearly resonates with Rousseau's notion of the liberation of self-control. In the realm of politics, positive liberty *is* "participation in democratic decision making" (Pettit 1990:162). Such participation shapes the "community's future and this active involvement in turn feeds back and situates the self-in-community" (Christodoulidis 1993: 65). A precondition of active participation is that the individual has both the capacity and the opportunity to be involved. This latter point underpins republican notions of citizenship education, with all its overtones of training and constraint.²⁸⁶ Liberty in this sense is an outcome of political activity, and this activity rests on the creation of the conditions for full active involvement by all eligible participants.

A contrast has been drawn between the 'positive' liberty described above and the narrower negative sense of 'resilient' liberty championed by Pettit, which he describes as 'republican liberty'. In this view, negative liberty, of whatever variety, is a *condition* of living rather than outcome of activity. Negative liberty "always involves non-interference" (Pettit 1993: 16). Pettit's argument is that while liberals view liberty as merely the condition of non-interference, republicans such as "Cicero, Machiavelli, Harrington, Montesquieu, Rousseau, and even de Tocqueville" understood liberty as non-interference of a special kind (Pettit 1993: 16). This notion of liberty is "resilient" when compared with the fragile liberal notion.

²⁸⁶ See Sherry (1995) for a good overview of the republican notion of citizenship education. See also Bloom (1978), Guttman (1987), Van Gunsteren (1976), Roche (1987), and Shklar (1990).

Liberal liberty does not go beyond the condition of non-interference to include consideration of how secure that condition is (Pettit 1993: 18). In contrast, Pettit argues, republican non-interference is secured by a supportive relationship with social and legal arrangements. Republican liberty remains a condition of living, but it is a secure one. Pettit suggests that this can be summarised in three principles of republican liberty: firstly, liberty is non-interference; secondly, liberty must be secure and, therefore, predictable, and not merely a “fluke” condition; and thirdly, as a consequence of the second principle, everyone must be aware of each other’s state of liberty (Pettit 1990: 164-166).

How does ‘resilient negative’ liberty differ from ‘positive’ liberty? At first glance it seems that the fundamental point of difference is over whether liberty is an outcome of activity or a whether it is a certain condition of living. This apparently clear distinction becomes less clear when the consequences of the resilient liberty argument are followed through to social arrangements. The role of law provides us with an example of this.

You will recall from Chapter Three that the law provides Rousseau with the defining characteristic of all republics, democratic or otherwise. Pettit notes that the liberal view of law is that it is an infringement on one’s liberty. Law is necessary in the liberal view to secure other freedoms. It is “inevitably an invasion of the individual’s liberty, albeit an invasion that may be offset by the invasions it inhibits” (Pettit 1993: 29). In other words, a law’s necessity, seen here as its justification, is measured by some form of cost-benefit analysis. In contrast, republicans holding a resiliently negative view of liberty would say that:

in standard cases, law is the means, or at least a crucial element of the means, whereby liberty is realised: law helps to construct or constitute liberty in those cases, as we may say, it does not relate to liberty in the manner of an extrinsic instrument (Pettit 1993: 29).

Here we have an argument that falls one step short of a notion of positive liberty. Republican liberty is constituted by a constraining force, in this case, law.

Pettit does not go on to consider where law in the republican model comes from. The source of law and the direction of power is the key to this debate. If 'law' is merely the product of social and political actions, perhaps via a legislature, then Pettit's distinction between positive and resiliently negative liberties looks shaky: law in a democratic republic is the product of political actions, and law constitutes liberty. Is that not the same as saying, in the positive sense of liberty, that political actions constitute liberty? One possible way to maintain the distinction is to separate law from politics, and thereby shield it from political activity. The other is to say that even if we concede that the two liberties are effectively the same, they are constituted differently: One is created by the individual participating in the community, the other is imposed on the individual by a higher body, even if that body is produced by individual activity.

The debate over positive and resiliently negative notions of republican liberty yields more heat than light. Perhaps the claims about positive and resiliently negative liberty shed light on the dominance of liberalism's claim to liberty more than anything else. It also shows most strongly the interlinking of republican themes: liberty cannot be understood without reference to virtue and self-control. Further, it emphasises that to understand republican ideas we must follow them both to their source and to their consequences.

APPENDIX C

What Do We Mean by Representation?

The idea of representation is sometimes described as an essentially contested concept.²⁸⁷ The word literally means ‘to present again’, or more colloquially ‘to make present that which is absent’.²⁸⁸ Pitkin identifies four basic concepts of representation, within which and between which theories of representation tend to fall. Firstly, representation can be viewed in terms of authorisation. Pitkin suggests that in this view:

[a] representative ... is a man who acts in the name of another, who has been given authority to act by that other, so that whatever the representative does is considered the act of the represented (Pitkin 1969: 8).

This view sees representation in terms of how it is begun, by an act which empowers the representative. Secondly, representation can be viewed in terms of accountability. Pitkin argues that in this view:

[a]bove all a representative is someone who will be held responsible to those for whom he acts, who must account to them for his actions (Pitkin 1969: 9).

This thesis, is in many ways the reverse of the authorisation argument, pointing not to the beginning but to the ending of representation, as the essence of the concept.

As Pitkin points out, both these arguments say nothing about what a representative is meant to do, other than to say that he or she has been authorised

²⁸⁷ See Gallie (1955-56), and Mason (1990).

²⁸⁸ On the range of views about representation see: Fairlie (1940a and 1940b); Griffiths & Wollheim (1960); Handcock (1947); Eulau (1967); Beard & Lewis (1932); Birch (1971); Pennock (1968); Pennock & Chapman (1968); Pitkin (1967, 1968, and 1969).

to do it, and that he will be held accountable (Pitkin 1969: 9). She points to two further streams of argument that seek to define the role of the representative.

Thirdly, representation can be seen as ‘standing for something absent’, either descriptively or symbolically. Descriptive representation argues that:

a legislature must be an accurate map of the whole nation, a portrait of the people, a faithful echo of their voice, a mirror which reflects accurately the various parts of the public. What qualifies a man to represent is his *representativeness* - not what he does but what he is or is like” (Pitkin 1969: 10).

Symbolic representation represents by association or belief, rather than accurate reflection. As a flag could be said to represent symbolically a nation, so a legislature could be said to symbolise the people (Pitkin 1969: 13). Both descriptive and symbolic views of representation focus on the constituents as the source of the representation, either literally in the case of descriptive representation, or abstractly in the case of symbolic representation. The representative is thus a re-active being dependent for legitimacy on how well he or she reflects the constituency.

Fourthly, representation can be seen as “acting for others” (Pitkin 1969: 14). The aim of this concept of representation is not so much to focus on the constituents, but rather on the representative as an actor. Representation is contingent on what representatives actually do. The representative is elected, not to reflect or symbolise the electorate, but to act in their name. This action obliges the electorate to obey what the representative decides to do. Griffiths calls this “ascriptive representation” (Griffiths and Wollheim 1960: 189), and argues that “A ascriptively represents B when the acts of A are taken as committing B to the normative consequences of acts which B has not strictly speaking done” (Griffiths and Wollheim 1960: 204). In other words, the constituents are committed to obey the acts of their representative. However, there is significant debate over what acts a representative may be allowed to do. Pitkin describes this as the ‘mandate-independence debate’:

should (must) a representative do what his constituents want, or what he thinks is best? On the one side are those writers who stress the popular mandate given to a representative by those for whom he acts, his obligation to do what they expect of him, to act as if they were acting themselves. On the other side are those who maintain that the representative must act independently, on his own judgement, that he is selected precisely for his special abilities, and that his job is to adapt and enlarge the constituents' special, separate needs into the national welfare (Pitkin 1969: 17-18).

The language of public and private may be useful in drawing the distinction within the mandate/independence debate. For the mandate theorist, the representative is a mouthpiece for public opinion. He or she suspends their private interests in order to reflect the public interest. This strikes me as absurd, if not impossible. The representative in this view may just as well have no private interests when acting in his public capacity. It also contains a further tension, because representation is seen as giving a public face to a private choice. The essentially private act of voting is meant to transfer somehow the private views of the voter to the public activity of the representative. This seems to be an unlikely process. For an elected representative to be able to know the personal views of the majority of his constituents on most issues is very unlikely, yet the mandate thesis is based upon this assumption. The mandate thesis can be summarised as follows:

Citizen's private opinions --> conveyed through the private act of voting --> Official's public acts

For the independence theorist, the representative is empowered by an election to act as his private views dictate. The citizen, in his private act of voting, chooses the candidate whose publicly stated private opinions most closely match his own. The representative has the full capacity to express his private views in public, and must do so in order to have a basis for action. The independence thesis clearly avoids the difficulties of the mandate thesis, by not requiring a mass-transferral of public opinion to the representative from private individuals. It may be summarised as follows:

Candidate -----> transmits his/her private -----> individual voter -----> empowers public
official
 opinions in public chooses the 'best to act independently
 statements fit' for his or her

private opinions.

The independence argument, whilst providing a fuller explanation of the public activity of representation, leaves itself open to the charge that a representative may be an elected despot. Because the representative has freedom to act as he wills, there is nothing to stop people from voting for someone who later abuses the public office for personal gain.

If we were to categorise James Mill's notion of virtual representation found in Chapter Four, it would fall somewhere along the mandate/symbolic reflection/accountability axis. This is consistent with his description of representatives in his essay "The Ballot" as "Trustees for the Community to which they belong; and in a Trust, importing the greatest good and evil, to the vast majority of their countrymen" (Mill 1992e: 235). Strictly speaking, a person holding to the 'virtual representation' thesis would probably be more comfortable with an independence/ascriptive representation/accountability view of representation. Mill is not a genuine virtualist, but his views are certainly at odds with standard utilitarian notions of representation.

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