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# Democracy's Value: A Conceptual Map

Elena Ziliotti<sup>1</sup>

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## 1 Introduction

The question of what kinds of values must figure in the justification of a certain division of political power is the object of numerous debates in contemporary democratic theory. If many theorists agree that instrumental considerations matter and that the ability of democratic procedures to produce good outcomes must be somehow taken into account, they disagree on whether other non-instrumental considerations are relevant for the choice between alternative institutional arrangements.

Some believe that, in addition to its instrumental value, democracy is 'intrinsically' valuable, such that democratic decision-making processes can be justified independently from their outcomes.<sup>1</sup> Another group claims that democracy is only 'instrumentally' valuable and that instrumental considerations must prevail in the choice among alternative institutional mechanisms.<sup>2</sup> Several scholars reject both

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<sup>1</sup> See Harry Brighouse, "Egalitarianism and Equal Availability of Political Influence," *The Journal of Political Philosophy*, 4(1996), pp. 118–141; Thomas Christiano, *The Rule of the Many: Fundamental Issues in Democratic Theory* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1996), "Is Democracy merely a Means to Social Justice?" (in Reeve A. and Williams A. (eds.), *Real Libertarianism Assessed: Political Theory after Van Parijs*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), pp. 172–200, "Debate: Estlund on Democratic Authority" *Journal of Political Philosophy* 17(2009), pp. 228–240; Christopher Griffin, "Democracy as a Non-Instrumentally Just Procedure," *Journal of Political Philosophy*, 11(2003), pp. 111–121; Lisa Hill, "Voting turnout, Equality, Liberty and Representation: Epistemic Versus Procedural democracy," *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy*, 19(2016), pp. 283–300; Maria Paula Saffon and Nadia Urbinati, "Procedural Democracy, the Bulwark of Equal Liberty," *Political Theory* 41(2013), pp. 441–481; Nadia Urbinati, *Democracy Disfigured* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014).

<sup>2</sup> See Richard Arneson, "Debate: Defending the Purely Instrumental Account of Democratic Legitimacy," *Journal of Political Philosophy*, 11(2003), pp. 122–132; Jason Brennan, *The Ethics of Voting* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), "The Right to a Competent Electorate," *Philosophical Quarterly*, 61(2011), pp. 700–724, *Against Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016); Ronald Dworkin, "What is Equality? Part 4: Political Equality," *University of San Francisco Law Review*, 22(1987), pp. 1–30; David Estlund, *Democratic Authority: A Philosophical Framework* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008); Robert Goodin, *Reflective Democracy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Hélène Landemore, *Democratic Reason* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017); Claudio López-Guerra, *Democracy and Disenfranchisement: The Morality of Electoral Exclu-*

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‘intrinsic’ and ‘consequentialist’ accounts of democracy and try to justify democracy on different grounds.<sup>3</sup>

All these groups aim to clarify the justification of democracy, but the basic terms of the debate are quite unclear; there are no agreed meanings attached to these terms. So, at certain points, the debate has been reduced to scholars talking past each other and, consequently, occasions to engage with alternative approaches have been missed. This is worrisome because, at the very least, it makes it more difficult for the discipline to grasp the desirability of democracy. This deadlock is intensified by the lack of common intuitions on democracy. As Jack Knight explicates:

if you value equality most and if you think that the best way to justify democracy is through a claim about how it instantiates equality, then there’s nothing that the epistemic democrats [one group of instrumentalists] are going to say to you that’s going to persuade you otherwise. If, on the other hand, you value the consequences most, there’s very little chance that a claim about equality per se is going to persuade you to change your position. So a lot of these debates seem to be working on separate tracks, without engaging, since it’s hard to figure out exactly where the engagement would take place.<sup>4</sup>

In order to sharpen the debate, we should first engage with a series of questions on the approaches that are currently being used for valuing democracy and come to an agreement on the basic terms of the debate. We should establish the conditions under which democracy can have ‘intrinsic’ value in relation to political ideals, such as liberty or equality; what kinds of values democratic institutions can bear and whether there are other values that we can ascribe to democracy besides the intrinsic and the instrumental ones.

The aim of this paper is both methodological and normative. It addresses the above theoretical questions and develops a philosophical analysis of the values of

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Footnote 2 (continued)

sions (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); Thomas Mulligan, “Plural Voting for the Twenty-first Century,” *The Philosophical Quarterly* 68(2017), pp. 286–306; “On the Compatibility of Epistocracy and Public Reason,” *Social Theory and Practice* 41(2015), pp. 458–476; Josiah Ober, *Democracy and Knowledge: Innovation and Knowledge in Classical Athens* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010); Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf Inc, 1999); Ilya Somin, *Democracy and Political Ignorance: Why Smaller Government is Smarter* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013); Robert Talisse, *Democracy and Moral Conflict* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Philippe Van Parijs, “Is Democracy Compatible with Justice?” *The Journal of Political Philosophy* 4 (1996), pp. 101–117; “The Disenfranchised of the Elderly, and Other Attempts to Secure Intergenerational Justice,” *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 27(1999), pp. 290–333).

<sup>3</sup> Elizabeth Anderson, “What is the Point of Equality?” *Ethics*, 103(1999), pp. 287–337; “Democracy: Instrumental vs. Non-Instrumental Value” (in Christiano T. and Christman J. (eds.), *Contemporary Debates in Political Philosophy*, Oxford: Blackwell, 2009), pp. 213–227; Samuel Scheffler, “What is Egalitarianism?,” *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 31(2003), pp. 5–39; Michael Walzer, *Spheres of Justice: A Defence of Pluralism and Equality* (Oxford: Martin Robertson, 1983); Niko Kolodny, “Rule Over None II: Social Equality and the Justification of Democracy,” *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 42(2004), pp. 287–336; Eric Beerbohm, *In Our Name: The Ethics of Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012); Jeffrey Howard, “The Labors of Justice: Democracy, Respect, and Judicial Review,” *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy* 22(2019), pp. 179–199.

<sup>4</sup> Jack Knight, Hélène Landemore, Nadia Urbinati & Daniel Viehoff, “Roundtable on Epistemic Democracy and Its Critics,” *Critical Review* 28(2016), p. 141.

democracy. The objective is to bring more clarity to the debate on the values of democracy and facilitate engagement among the various kinds of justifications of democracy. Thus, I do not defend one justification of democracy against the others. I intervene in the literature to propose a neutral conceptual scheme that can be adopted by democratic theorists of different stripes to formulate criticisms, rule out normative conclusions and make new arguments. My hope is that this conceptual analysis will help disambiguate some of the basic terms of the debate, reduce the risk of miscommunication by clarifying our vocabulary and guide theorists' judgments on the values of democracy. To this aim, this paper also makes several normative points. For example, it shows how critics should not engage with intrinsic defences of democracy and that some critiques of epistemic democracy are unsound. This paper also explains why some of what I call 'necessary defences' of democracy (which have been advanced by relational egalitarians and Niko Kolodny) are weak and offers some suggestions on how to strengthen them.

Starting from Christine Korsgaard's and Rae Langton's typologies, I develop a conceptual framework for clarifying the possible ways to value things (Section I).<sup>5</sup> I then apply this conceptual framework to democracy and define the possible values of democracy. I connect each approach to democracy with contemporary democratic theories. Here, three main groups of arguments are identified: claims to the intrinsic (Section II), instrumental (Section III), or contributory (Section IV) value of democracy. I tease out the main differences among these claims. For each type of claims, I discuss the problematic aspects of the main arguments in defence of these claims and correct faulty critiques.

## 2 A Theory of Value

Korsgaard and Langton agree that things have different values.<sup>6</sup> For example, something that is valuable for its own sake is *intrinsically valuable*. That is, it is good in itself.<sup>7</sup> Friendship is a typical example of an intrinsically valuable thing (at least when certain background conditions are met, such as the existence of human beings). A genuine friend is someone who loves or likes another person for the sake of that other person. This implies that if the main reason for my affection for a

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<sup>5</sup> See Christine Korsgaard, "Two Distinctions of Goodness," *The Philosophical Review*, 92(1983), pp. 169–195; Rae Langton, "Objectivity and the Unconditioned Value," *The Philosophical Review*, 116(2007), pp. 157–185.

<sup>6</sup> Despite their differences, both Langton and Korsgaard acknowledge the possible differences between the values of things and how we value things. In their view, it does not follow that a thing has instrumental value from the fact that we value it instrumentally. The former claim in fact tells us something about how the thing is like, while the latter one expresses how we think the thing is like. The debate on the metaphysics of values is complex and it cannot be adequately discussed here. Thus, I remain neutral with respect to this debate.

<sup>7</sup> As democratic theories are the object of this paper, I have been forced to ignore important disagreements in value theory and simplify some theoretical distinctions. Such a taxonomy, therefore, may not be acceptable to all value theorists. However, it should not be too controversial such that it could be accessible to democratic theorists.

person is the individual gain which I may obtain through that person, my relationship with her is not a friendship, properly speaking.<sup>8</sup> One aspect to consider is that an intrinsically valuable thing can be a *pro tanto* good. This is seen in the fact that although we care a lot about a friend, under certain circumstances, there may be other things or persons more valuable than our friend.

Obviously, things can also be non-intrinsically valuable. Something is *extrinsically valuable* if it is valuable for the sake of something else. Unlike intrinsically valuable things, the extrinsic value of an object derives from the value of something that is not the object itself. There are at least two ways in which something can be extrinsically valuable: its value can be either *instrumental* or *non-instrumental*.<sup>9</sup> Instrumentally valuable things are those that are valuable for their effects or contribute to bringing about a certain desirable condition. Thus, in the case of instrumental values, the value can be transmitted through a causal relation. For example, the fence around my house is valuable because it protects my family's safety and it stands in a causal relation to some desirable state of affairs, namely my family's safety. Other instrumental values are not transmitted through a causal relation. For example, admission to medical school is instrumentally valuable because it can help someone to positively impact the lives of others through health care. But clearly, this is not a causal relation.

Langton defines non-instrumental values as things that are valuable not for the effects that they can produce. This is a general definition, but we can indicate at least two ways in which something can be extrinsically and non-instrumentally valuable: we can value something *symbolically* or *contributorily*. In the first case, the object is appreciated as a representation of something valuable.<sup>10</sup> For example, the flag of a political party can have a strong symbolic value. In the case of symbolic value, the transmitting relation is representative. This means that the value of the symbol depends on the belief that the symbol 'stands for' or 'refers to' something else that is valuable. The value of the political party flag derives from the value ascribed to the political party and the belief that the flag refers to that political party.

Something is contributorily valuable when it is part of a valuable whole.<sup>11</sup> This is the value of a member of the Great March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom

<sup>8</sup> This view of friendship is similar to the Aristotelian idea of *friendship based on character*. Aristotle thought that "[t]hose who wish good things to their friends for the sake of the latter are friends most of all, because they do so because of their friends themselves, and not coincidentally" (David Ross, *Nicomachean Ethics*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2009, pp. 1156b9–1156b11).

<sup>9</sup> Rae Langton, "Objectivity and the Unconditioned Value," *The Philosophical Review*, 116(2007), p. 163.

<sup>10</sup> My definition of symbolic values is similar to Ben Bradley's notion of 'signatory value'. According to Bradley, this latter is something that "could be good not because of what it causes or is a means to, but rather because of what it signifies" ("Extrinsic Value," *Philosophical Studies* 91(1998), p. 110). For discussions on symbolic values as extrinsic and non-instrumental values, see Shelly Kogan, "Rethinking Intrinsic Value," *Journal of Ethics* 2(1998), p. 109, and Toni Rønnow-Rasmussen, "Instrumental Values: Strong and Weak," *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 5(2002), p. 33.

<sup>11</sup> Clarence I. Lewis suggested the presence of contributory values in his work *An Analysis of Knowledge and Valuation* (Indianapolis: Open Court, 1946). Lewis' notion was subsequently elaborated by Robert Olson's "The Good", in P. Edwards (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (New York: MacMillan Co. & the Free Press, 1967).

in 1963 or the value of the wing of the aeroplane on which we are flying. In the case of contributory value, the transmitting relation between the object and the valuable whole is mereological. For instance, a member of the Great March is valuable by virtue of being part of the Great March, which is valuable in the first place.

Symbolic values are not necessarily also contributorily valuable. The flag of a political party is not a constitutive part of the political party. Likewise, a contributory value is not symbolically valuable by default. The wing of the aeroplane on which we are flying does not represent something else of value. Contributory and symbolic values can also be instrumentally valuable, but they are not reducible to instances of instrumental value. For example, it is silly to think that since the flag is a symbol of the political party, it can promote the political party's ideas.

It should be noted that a contributory value does not necessarily bear the same value as that of the whole of which it is a part. A mereological relationship indeed is not transitive and the properties of a valuable whole are not always transmissible to its parts. For instance, the Great March is historically significant, but it would be odd to say that one member of the march had the same historic value. This example suggests another specific aspect of contributory values: a contributory value is not always a necessary part of the valuable whole to which it belongs. The reason is that a mereological relationship does not always entail a necessary condition. Although contributorily valuable, a member of the Great March is not a necessary part of it because the march would have taken place even if one of the members, who was sick, remained at home.

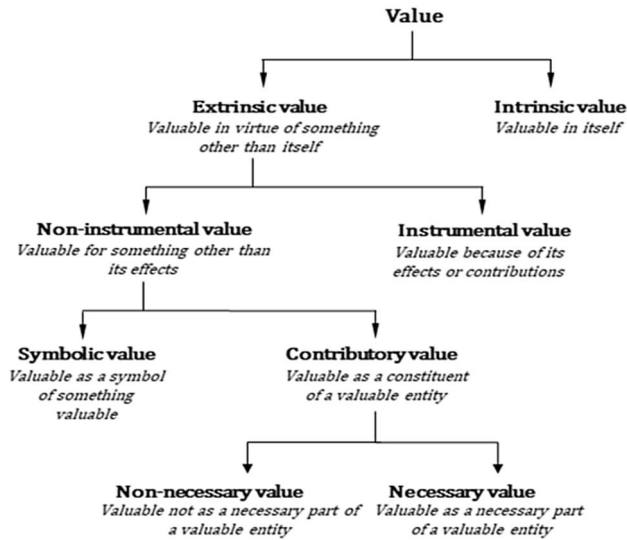
These considerations suggest the existence of a particular subset of contributory values—*necessary constituents*. These are essential parts of the valuable whole, which are related to it through a necessary relationship. Martin Luther King Jr.'s presence at the Great March is a necessary constituent of the latter, because the march would not have been the same without his presence—his historic 'I Have a Dream' speech that called for the end of racism has remained impressed in many people's memories as the iconic moment of the march. Thus, it can be said that if X is a necessary constituent of Y and Y is something valuable, X has necessary value. Both necessary values and values that are contributory but non-necessary are extremely important for the purpose of this paper because as we will see in Section IV, these two conceptualizations apply to the ways several scholars value democracy. Figure 1 summarizes our general discussion on how things can be valued.

### 3 Intrinsic Defences of Democracy

To investigate the values of democracy, I employ the conceptual framework developed in the last section. As discussed above, valuing democracy intrinsically means valuing it for its own sake (at least when certain background conditions are met).<sup>12</sup> Democracy is intrinsically valuable when no consideration external to democracy

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<sup>12</sup> In debates on democratic theory, these background conditions are represented by the main features of a pluralistic post-industrial society.



**Figure 1** Ways to value things

itself motivates this assessment, such as people's welfare. In this case, democracy is valued as we do with friendship: in itself. However, as I said in the previous section, to consider democracy intrinsically valuable does not imply that democracy is also a *summum bonum*; other ideas could be more valuable than democracy. Therefore, if democracy is intrinsically valuable, it would be a *pro tanto* good for us.

The significance of the claim to the intrinsic value of democracy partly depends on the fact that it offers a *prima facie* reason to prefer democracy over less democratic forms of government. In fact, the claim encourages the belief that more democratic systems are intrinsically more valuable, and hence more desirable, than less democratic ones.<sup>13</sup> This is a strong claim that cannot be defended without considerable clarification and compelling justification. I will return to this important issue later in this section.

Many scholars in Western democratic theory endorse the intrinsic value of democracy.<sup>14</sup> Proponents of the intrinsic value of democracy hold different

<sup>13</sup> Philippe Van Parijs, "Hybrid Justice, Patriotism and Democracy: A Selective Reply" (in Andrew Reeve and Andrew Williams (eds.), *Real Libertarianism Assessed: Political Theory after Van Parijs*, New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003), p. 213.

<sup>14</sup> For some claims to the intrinsic value of democracy, see Charles Beitz, *Political Equality: An Essay in Democratic Theory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989); Harry Brighouse, "Political Equality and the Funding of Political Speech," *Social Theory and Practice*, 21(1995), pp. 473–500; "Egalitarianism and Equal Availability of Political Influence," *Journal of Political Philosophy* 4(1996), pp. 118–141, "Democracy and Inequality," (in A. Carter A. & G. Stokes, (eds.), *Democratic Theory Today*, Cambridge: Cambridge Polity Press, 2002); Allen Buchanan, "Political Legitimacy and Democracy," *Ethics*, 122(2002), pp. 689–719; Thomas Christiano, *The Rule of the Many: Fundamental Issues in Democratic Theory*, "Is Democracy Merely a Means to Social Justice?" (in Andrew Reeve and Andrew Williams, (eds.), *Real Libertarianism Assessed: Political Theory after Van Parijs*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), *The Constitution of Equality: Democratic Authority and its Limits* (Oxford: Oxford



conceptions of justice, but all of them share the general belief that democracy is intrinsically just, such that the norms of the democratic legislative process are in compliance with justice. The most compelling defence of the intrinsic value of democracy has been developed by political egalitarians, like Harry Brighouse, Thomas Christiano and Christopher Griffin.<sup>15</sup> According to political egalitarians, 'democracy' refers to the main features of a legislative decision-making process in which people have an equal chance to advance their interests. At the initial stage of the political decision-making, each adult citizen has equal possibilities to influence the outcome of the decision. Political egalitarians understand equality in terms of justice, such that "the idea that equality in the advancement of interests is the principle of distributive justice".<sup>16</sup> Democracy—political egalitarians claim—is intrinsically valuable because its procedural mechanism realizes equality. In other words, the democratic decision-making mechanism is intrinsically valuable because egalitarian justice is realized through the equal distribution of political power among the members of society at the primary stage of the collective decision-making process.

This claim leaves us puzzled. How is it possible for democracy to be intrinsically valuable for the sake of something else? Is it true that a thing has intrinsic value only in virtue of itself? For egalitarians, the value that is ascribed to democracy must be related to the one they see in equality. This suggests that democracy can be intrinsically valuable for equality only if democracy is reducible to equality. That is only if, from a certain perspective, democracy can be understood as equality itself. Only in this case would democracy have the same intrinsic value that egalitarians attribute to equality.

The idea that democracy is reducible to equality is exactly the basis of the political egalitarians' claim to the intrinsic value of democracy. Political egalitarians maintain that democracy is intrinsically valuable because it is the only public way

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Footnote 14 (continued)

University Press, 2008); Christopher G. Griffin, "Democracy as a Non-instrumentally Just Procedure," *Journal of Political Philosophy* 111(2003), pp. 111–121; Joshua Cohen, "Deliberation and Democratic Legitimacy" (in Alan Hamlin and Philip Pettit (eds.), *The Good Polity*, Oxford and New York: Basil Blackwell, 1989), "Democratic Equality," *Ethics* 99(1989), pp. 727–775; Maria Paula Saffon and Nadia Urbinati, "Procedural Democracy, the Bulwark of Equal Liberty," *Political Theory* 41(2013), pp. 441–481; Nadia Urbinati, *Democracy Disfigured*.

<sup>15</sup> Harry Brighouse, "Political Equality and the Funding of Political Speech," *Social Theory and Practice*, 21(1995), pp. 473–500, "Egalitarianism and Equal Availability of Political Influence," *Journal of Political Philosophy* 4(1996), pp. 118–141, "Democracy and Inequality," (in A. Carter A. & G. Stokes (eds.), *Democratic Theory Today*, Cambridge: Cambridge Polity Press, 2002); Thomas Christiano, *The Rule of the Many: Fundamental Issues in Democratic Theory*, "Is Democracy Merely a Means to Social Justice?" (in Andrew Reeve and Andrew Williams (eds.), *Real Libertarianism Assessed: Political Theory after Van Parijs*, New York: Palgrave Macmillian, 2003), *The Constitution of Equality: Democratic Authority and its Limits*; Christopher Griffin, "Democracy as a Non-instrumentally Just Procedure," *Journal of Political Philosophy* 111(2003), pp. 111–121.

<sup>16</sup> Thomas Christiano, *The Constitution of Equality: Democratic Authority and its Limits*, p. 13.

to manifest equality against a background of facts of diversity and disagreements.<sup>17</sup> Our societies are characterized by the citizens' persistent disagreements over political and social matters.<sup>18</sup> Under these conditions, the expression of equality is problematic: if any policy prioritizes the view of some, equality requires adopting a decision-making procedure such that people should be able to understand by themselves that they are treated as equals, regardless of the outcome.<sup>19</sup> Any egalitarian principle of justice, such as equality of resources or opportunity for welfare, fails to express equality because it is highly likely that the principle and its application would be highly controversial.<sup>20</sup> Democracy avoids the disagreement issue by publicly giving to all equal chances to advance their interests and an equal say over how the common world is to be shaped.<sup>21</sup> This conveys the idea that each individual's interest and opinion is receiving equal respect, despite the outcome of the decision-making process.<sup>22</sup>

Strictly speaking, for political egalitarians, political equality has *first-order* intrinsic value: that is, it is valuable for its own sake because it is the realization of egalitarian justice. The democratic institutions characterizing our political systems are how the ideal of political equality can be expressed and put into practice. Therefore, if political equality has first-order intrinsic value, democratic institutions may be said to possess *second-order* intrinsic value. In other words, they are intrinsically valuable insofar as they actualize the idea of political equality.

The foregoing analysis differs from Daniel Viehoff's interpretation of political egalitarianism. According to Viehoff, political egalitarians value democracy contributorily because they "claim that a fair procedure has value that derives from the contribution that the outcome-independent qualities of the procedure make to certain other things that are of value: for instance, treating our fellow citizens with respect, as equals, and so on".<sup>23</sup> Viehoff's interpretation can be true only under two circumstances. First, Viehoff's interpretation would be true if political egalitarians considered equality to be a complex ideal (like an ideal society) of which justice is only one part of it. However, as discussed earlier, political egalitarians exclude this possibility. Second, Viehoff's claim would be true if political egalitarians believed that egalitarian justice could be achieved through the application of more than one egalitarian principle of justice besides just political equality. However, as I have explained, political egalitarians reject also this option.

<sup>17</sup> Thomas Christiano, *The Constitution of Equality: Democratic Authority and its Limits*, p. 88.

<sup>18</sup> Christopher Griffin, "Democracy as a Non-instrumentally Just Procedure," *Journal of Political Philosophy* 111(2003), p.119.

<sup>19</sup> Thomas Christiano, *The Rule of the Many: Fundamental Issues in Democratic Theory*, p. 67.

<sup>20</sup> Thomas Christiano, "The Authority of Democracy," *Journal of Political Philosophy* 12(2004), p. 86.

<sup>21</sup> Thomas Christiano, *The Constitution of Equality: Democratic Authority and its Limits*, p. 88.

<sup>22</sup> Christopher Griffin, "Democracy as a Non-instrumentally Just Procedure," *Journal of Political Philosophy* 111(2003), p.119.

<sup>23</sup> Daniel Viehoff, "The Truth in Political Instrumentalism," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, Vol. CXVII, Part 3(2017), p. 277.

From this, it follows that for political egalitarians, an equal distribution of resources for participating in collective decision making does not *contribute* to treating others as equals, rather it is the realization of equality at the political level. “So it is by distributing equally the resources for making collective decisions about the common social world that the equal consideration of interests can be publicly *realized* to all citizens [emphasis added]”.<sup>24</sup> The idea that democracy is the realization of equality is particularly important because, as I will explain in Section IV, it distinguishes political egalitarianism from the contributory defences of democracy.

Recently, another account of the intrinsic value of democracy has been proposed by Maria Paula Saffon and Nadia Urbinati.<sup>25</sup> Similar to the political egalitarians’ claim, Saffon and Urbinati’s claim presupposes a special relationship between democracy and a valuable political ideal. According to Saffon and Urbinati, political liberty is intrinsically valuable and the democratic decisional process embodies the value of liberty. In their view, an adequate democratic procedure is the best manifestation of liberty because political freedom for all citizens is what ultimately characterizes democracy and allows it to operate adequately.

So democracy is a question of rights protection through the exercise of political rights to participate in making laws, which means it’s a question of liberty protection.<sup>26</sup>

The rights that are required for the democratic procedure to operate properly, that is, to comply with its basic procedural traits of anonymity, neutrality, positive responsiveness and decisiveness, should be considered intrinsic to democracy. Although, by being enshrined in the constitution, they impose limits on democracy’s operation and outcomes, they ensure the process’s democratic nature and its continuity.<sup>27</sup>

Now, if we put all the considerations mentioned above together, we would reach a conclusion on where and how theorists should engage with intrinsic defences of democracy. As the soundness of intrinsic views of democracy depends on whether democratic processes are the best expression of a political ideal, critics can either argue that these ideals are not the most important standards to assess decision-making processes or show that democratic procedures are not manifestations of valuable ideals, such as political equality or liberty. This will block the transmission of intrinsic value from equality or liberty to democracy.

Returning to the issue that I raised at the beginning of this section, proponents of democracy’s intrinsic value should be pressed to justify the idea that democratic systems are always somehow more valuable than less democratic ones. According to Eric Beerbohm, this is a counter-intuitive consequence of the intrinsic view and,

<sup>24</sup> Daniel Viehoff, “The Truth in Political Instrumentalism,” p. 195.

<sup>25</sup> Maria Paula Saffon and Nadia Urbinati, “Procedural Democracy, the Bulwark of Equal Liberty,” *Political Theory* 41(2013), pp. 441–481.

<sup>26</sup> Nadia Urbinati, *Democracy Disfigured*, p. 147.

<sup>27</sup> Maria Paula Saffon and Nadia Urbinati, “Procedural Democracy, the Bulwark of Equal Liberty,” p. 468.

therefore, it proves its falsehood.<sup>28</sup> If democracy was intrinsically valuable, Beerbohm argues, we would experience less indignation when we learn that a polity reached an immoral decision through an impeccably democratic process. However, the opposite is true: “[o]ur moral horror at an odious practice can be greater when a democratic process is responsible for its enactment”.<sup>29</sup> This proves that democracy’s value is context-sensitive, not intrinsic. If the negative value of a decisional procedure can be heightened by its democratic pedigree, democracy’s value is “borrowed but never owned”.<sup>30</sup>

For Christiano, Beerbohm’s critique misses the point: a democratic procedure that realizes political equality cannot decide to enact an odious practice but only make decisions that are respectful of political equality. Christiano explains, “[a] democratic assembly realizes public equality by giving each an equal say in the process of collective decision-making”.<sup>31</sup> But “a decision of a democratic assembly defeats this expressive character of democracy when the legislation made clearly undermines public equality”.<sup>32</sup> The reason is that “[i]f the democratic assembly fails to do something that *it can do* to realize public equality [emphasis added], then it shows that it does not take public equality seriously in its decision-making. But if it fails to take public equality seriously in its decision-making, then it cannot fully embody public equality for the same reasons as when it passes legislation that violates public equality”.<sup>33</sup> So, for Christiano, Beerbohm overlooks the fact that expressing political equality at the procedural level must be followed by producing political outcomes that respect political equality.

Has Christiano’s effort to overcome Beerbohm’s critique been successful? I believe that it has not as it rests on an ambiguity of what ‘taking political equality seriously in the decision-making’ means. In the first quote in the previous paragraph, Christiano explains that the realization of political equality by a democratic procedure depends *on the way* the assembly makes its decisions. This suggests that taking political equality seriously entails fulfilling a kind of ‘procedural requirement’ according to which every citizen must have equal opportunity to effectively participate in the initial stage of the decision-making. But it is difficult to maintain—as Christiano does in the rest of the quotes—that such a procedural condition is compatible with limitations on what the assembly can and cannot decide. On the contrary, restricting the decisional power of the assembly can fail to take political equality seriously at the procedural level because it limits a priori the political power of the democratic assembly’s members that would support the rejected decision. So, the procedural requirement clashes with the outcome requirement. This is problematic for Christiano because, without the latter requirement, Beerbohm’s

<sup>28</sup> Eric Beerbohm, *In our Name: The Ethics of Democracy*.

<sup>29</sup> Eric Beerbohm, *In our Name: The Ethics of Democracy*, p. 36.

<sup>30</sup> Eric Beerbohm, *In our Name: The Ethics of Democracy*, p. 37.

<sup>31</sup> Thomas Christiano, “Reply to Critics of the Constitutions of Equality,” *Journal of Ethics and Social Philosophy* (2011), p. 2.

<sup>32</sup> Thomas Christiano, “Reply to Critics of the Constitutions of Equality,” p. 3.

<sup>33</sup> Thomas Christiano, *The Constitutions of Equality*, p. 276.

challenge stands in his way. In the absence of an outcome requirement, any decisional procedure will be intrinsically valuable regardless of its content if the decisional procedure respects political equality. Furthermore, as Corey Brettschneider points out, Christiano's reply to Beerbohm risks collapsing his view into an instrumental idea of democratic authority because it suggests that "authority is ultimately linked to the kind of outcomes produced, not to the way a procedure manifests public equality".<sup>34</sup>

So, what can proponents of the intrinsic value of democracy do to overcome Beerbohm's critique? One interesting attempt is offered by Corey Brettschneider. For Brettschneider, the only way to maintain the claim that democracy is intrinsically valuable is to accept Beerbohm's critique and offer an explanation of why, as counter-intuitive as it may sound, "laws passed by a democratic assembly retain some intrinsic value even when they undermine substantive democratic values".<sup>35</sup> Brettschneider applies this strategy in his *Democratic Rights*, where he places the value of democratic laws that violate political equality on the intrinsic value of the assembly's respect for a core democratic value, 'the right to participate' in democratic governance.<sup>36</sup>

The above analysis also reveals how critics should not engage with intrinsic views of democracy. One issue that critics should avoid is showing that democratic procedure is a sub-optimal means to express or realize another ideal other than liberty or equality. This objection is ineffective unless critics can also prove that this ideal is more valuable than liberty and equality. A similar mistake is committed by Philippe Van Parijs when he criticizes Thomas Christiano's political egalitarianism.<sup>37</sup> Van Parijs claims that democratic governance is not intrinsically valuable because democracy does not always bring justice. In his view, justice demands strong income-redistribution to lift up the worse-off in society, but the internal electoral mechanism of democracy requires accommodating the will of the median voters, who usually are not willing to implement strong-redistributive policies. This, in turn, brings democratic governments to favour low taxation which goes against the purpose of justice.<sup>38</sup> Christiano can reject Van Parijs' criticism because it is based

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<sup>34</sup> Corey Brettschneider, "Judicial Review and Democratic Authority," *Journal of Ethics and Social Philosophy* (2011), p. 8.

<sup>35</sup> Corey Brettschneider, "Judicial Review and Democratic Authority," p. 6.

<sup>36</sup> Corey Brettschneider, *Democratic Rights* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), pp. 143–144.

<sup>37</sup> Philippe Van Parijs, "Hybrid Justice, Patriotism and Democracy: A Selective Reply", p. 212–214.

<sup>38</sup> Furthermore, Van Parijs points out that democracy can be unjust also with respect to immigrants who may have immigrated due to economic hardships in their home-country. Since the global economic disparities are mainly due to state boundaries (somebody might experience economic difficulties only because she happened to be born in one country rather than another), justice would require letting capital and workers move freely. However, contrary to justice, democratic political systems tend to defend the interests of the majority by endorsing closed-border policies to discourage the arrival of new immigrants (Philippe Van Parijs, "Justice and Democracy: Are they Incompatible?" *Journal of Political Philosophy*, 4(2), pp. 108–109).

on a liberal conception of justice as described by John Rawls.<sup>39</sup> A more effective critique of political egalitarianism would have to show that democracy is disrespectful from an egalitarian standpoint.

#### 4 Instrumental Defences of Democracy

The instrumental approach defends democracy to the extent that it contributes to producing certain outcomes. “Democracy, in other words, should be regarded as a tool or instrument that is to be valued not for its own sake but entirely for what results from having it”<sup>40</sup>. Along these lines, some instrumentalists argue that certain fundamental rights (e.g. freedom of expression, privacy, and individual liberties) ought to be the utmost objectives for a good government and that democracy is the best political mechanism to guarantee such rights. Richard Arneson maintains that a democratic decisional procedure guarantees the people the greatest fulfillment of their fundamental rights over a long-term period.<sup>41</sup> Similarly, Amartya Sen argues that democratic institutions force decision-makers to consider the interests of many citizens and, consequently, provide them with a high chance of obtaining basic rights.<sup>42</sup> Others believe that democracy should guarantee much more than the basic rights of the people. In their view, what can make democratic institutions truly desirable is the kind of socio-political conditions that democracy can bring about, like decent socio-economic living conditions and social justice.<sup>43</sup>

The most common instrumental defence of democracy is currently epistemic democracy.<sup>44</sup> For epistemic democrats, democracy is special because it generates outcomes with the best epistemic value. Similar to the Aristotelian idea that ‘many heads are better than one’, epistemic democrats argue that more minds bring more relevant

<sup>39</sup> This is Christiano’s standpoint in “Is Democracy Merely a Means to Social Justice?”, pp. 172–197.

<sup>40</sup> Richard Arneson, “Democracy Is Not Intrinsically Just” (in Keith Dowding, Robert E. Goodin and Carole Pateman (eds.), *Justice and Democracy: Essays for Brian Barry*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2004), p. 42.

<sup>41</sup> Richard Arneson, “Debate: Defending the Purely Instrumental Account of Democratic Legitimacy,” *Journal of Political Philosophy*, 11(2003), pp. 122–132.

<sup>42</sup> According to Sen, the superiority of democratic forms of governance is proven also by the fact that “no substantial famine has ever occurred in any independent country with a democratic form of government and a relatively free press”, *Development as Freedom*, p. 152.

<sup>43</sup> For an instrumental justification of democracy on the basis of its ability to guarantee decent socio-economic living conditions for citizens, see Ronald Dworkin, “What is Equality? Part 4: Political Equality,” *University of San Francisco Law Review*, 22(1987), pp. 1–30; Philippe Van Parijs argues that democratic institutions are truly desirable only if they can bring social justice (See his “Justice and Democracy: Are they Incompatible?” *Journal of Political Philosophy*, 4(1996), pp. 101–117).

<sup>44</sup> David Estlund, *Democratic Authority: A Philosophical Framework*; Robert Goodin, *Reflective Democracy*; Hélène Landemore, *Democratic Reason*; Robert Talisse, *Democracy and Moral Conflict*.

considerations and therefore more chances to reach a sound conclusion.<sup>45</sup> So, since democracy entails a greater quantity of input, it is inferred that democracy has also higher chances to produce good epistemic outcomes than other kinds of decision-making procedures.

A crucial aspect of instrumental approaches to democracy is that they can develop into critiques of democracy if an alternative decision-making process has a higher probability of achieving good outcomes. The reason is that if the quality of political decisions matters more than the continuation of democratic institutions, then other political institutions could be a more desirable solution than democratic institutions—provided they can reach a better outcome than democratic ones.

Recent epistocratic theories are an example.<sup>46</sup> The epistocrats and the epistemic democrats agree that the value of decision-making processes depends exclusively on their ability to reach sound political decisions, but they disagree on whether democracy is the best decisional mechanism to reach this aim. According to the epistocrats, the average citizens' political incompetence dramatically jeopardizes the well-being of large democracies. When it comes to political decisions, the average voters make systematic and dangerous mistakes and their preferences move unitarily as a single force, preventing the competent minority from influencing the result of general elections.<sup>47</sup>

As a result, the epistocrats argue for a distribution of political power on the basis of political competence and defend amendments to the democratic processes.<sup>48</sup> For example, Thomas Mulligan proposes *plural voting* (where every citizen may express one vote, but the more politically competent citizens have the right to additional votes); Jason Brennan defends a *restricted suffrage* (according to which a right to vote is acquired through a political competence exam or based on certain educational credentials); and Claudio López-Guerra argues for an *enfranchisement lottery* (a random selection of thousands of citizens, who will acquire the right to vote after passing a competence-building tests).<sup>49</sup>

<sup>45</sup> David Estlund, *Democratic Authority: A Philosophical Framework*, p. 160.

<sup>46</sup> Jason Brennan, *The Ethics of Voting* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), "The Right to a Competent Electorate," *Philosophical Quarterly*, 61(2011), pp.700–724, *Against Democracy*; Claudio López-Guerra, *Democracy and Disenfranchisement: The Morality of Electoral Exclusions*; Thomas Mulligan, "Plural Voting for the Twenty-first Century," *The Philosophical Quarterly* 68(2017), pp. 286–306, "On the Compatibility of Epistocracy and Public Reason," *Social Theory and Practice* 41(2015), pp. 458–476); Ilya Somin, *Democracy and Political ignorance: Why Smaller Government is Smarter*.

<sup>47</sup> For a detailed defense of the average voter's ignorance thesis, see Brian Caplan, *The Myth of the Rational Voter: Why Democracies Choose Bad Policies* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007) and Jason Brennan, *The Ethics of Voting*.

<sup>48</sup> Also Van Parijs, who values democracy instrumentally, suspects that other approaches may maximize the required value better than democracy. See Van Parijs' "The Disenfranchised of the Elderly, and Other Attempts to Secure Intergenerational Justice," *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 27(1999), pp. 290–333.

<sup>49</sup> Thomas Mulligan, "Plural Voting for the Twenty-first Century," *The Philosophical Quarterly* 68(2017), pp. 286–306; Jason Brennan, *The Ethics of Voting*; Claudio López-Guerra, *Democracy and Disenfranchisement: The Morality of Electoral Exclusions*.

The dependence of the instrumental value of democracy on its outcomes creates a tension between epistocrats and epistemic democrats that has not been fully explored yet. In fact, it could be argued that instrumentalists should question the epistocrats' current proposals to limit the political participation to the most competent voters. Arguably, a political institutional system that equates political competence with the selection of 'the most talented' or 'the smartest' can also produce undesirable outcomes. For instance, it can engender significant divisions in society; it can lead to negative feelings in the public, making the rest feel as though 'they are not good enough', and cultivate in some the dangerous attitude of elitism.

The epistocrats may rebut that this conclusion is likely to be false. After all, they may say, not all inequalities of power which derive from non-democratic means are necessarily controversial. Most of us accept some inequalities of power, such as those in teacher-student, parent-child, or captain-team members relationships, where those with more power are expected to exercise it in a respectful way and in the interests of all parties. So why should we be disturbed by unequal divisions of political power?

The epistocrats are right in saying that our private lives are characterized by several unequal relations of power. Nevertheless, we should not accept their analogical argument so quickly. After all, it is also true that power at the societal level seems to work differently. Even in some Western democratic societies, some people with more power (whether political or otherwise) often treat or think of the others as inferior. The above considerations do not aim to defend one view against the other. On the contrary, they create room for debates on the consequences of epistocrats' political proposals.

To conclude this section, let me discuss a popular, and yet fallacious, way to criticize instrumental defences of democracy. Supporters of the intrinsic value of democracy have pointed out that instrumental defences of democracy run the risk of turning into critiques of democracy if alternative decisional processes perform better in relation to the desired outcomes. For instance, Urbinati warns epistemic democrats that: "putting value in the achievable outcomes over or instead of the procedures may prepare the terrain for a sympathetic welcome to technocratic revisions of democracy".<sup>50</sup> Urbinati reiterates this point when, commenting on Hélène Landemore's epistemic theory of democracy, she says that "[e]pistemic democracy would turn out to first devalue voting and then prefer not to have universal suffrage; or concentrate on the small number of persons selected by the followers from the general mass as more likely to possess the information and discernment to solve the complicated questions, so that small groups, deliberative small assemblies are better than voting".<sup>51</sup> According to Urbinati, instrumental justifications of democracy, like Landemore's, are dangerous because it is unlikely that democracy is the best decision-making process to achieve good epistemic outcomes.

<sup>50</sup> Nadia Urbinati, *Democracy Disfigured*, p. 82.

<sup>51</sup> Jack Knight, Hélène Landemore, Nadia Urbinati & Daniel Viehoff, "Roundtable on Epistemic Democracy and Its Critics," *Critical Review* 28(2016), p. 152.



This criticism is a non-starter because it points to implications of the instrumental approach to democracy endorsed by all instrumentalists. As we have seen before, being open to the possibility of non-democratic decisional processes (provided that they can produce sounder political decisions) is part of what it means to be an instrumentalist. So, Urbinati fails to explain why the main value of democracy is not instrumental. Perhaps Urbinati intends to show that Landemore's theory is not a sound justification of democracy because, if we unpack its full conclusions, it will result in a criticism of democracy. But even in this case, Urbinati fails to offer evidence to support her claim.

A more effective way for supporters of the intrinsic value of democracy to engage with instrumentalists is to press them to explain why the achievement of certain political outcomes is more important than the realization of certain political conditions that can be expressed only through democratic processes. In this regard, Urbinati should push Landemore to clarify why in her view the achievement of good epistemic outcomes is theoretically more significant than ensuring the liberty of the present population. These are important questions that get into the heart of the issue where an exciting debate can begin.

## 5 Contributory Defences of Democracy

Finally, let us now turn to consider democracy as extrinsically but non-instrumentally valuable. Like the intrinsic defences of democracy, contributory defences of democracy are primarily based on non-instrumental considerations. According to these views, the consequences that the democratic process can bring about do not have any normative weight in terms of justifications of democracy. However, contributory approaches reject the idea that democracy is reducible to something valuable. Democracy, proponents of democracy's contributory value argue, is a constituent part of a valuable ideal or entity.

There are two ways to value democracy contributorily: one way is to consider it as a necessary constituent of a valuable whole, and another is to view democracy as a constituent but not a necessary part of something valuable. The next two subsections discuss examples of these two kinds of contributory defences of democracy.

### 5.1 Necessary Defences of Democracy

According to several necessary defences of democracy, democracy is a necessary constituent of what equality is, but it is not reducible to equality. The necessary view of democracy for equality is supported by Niko Kolodny and relational egalitarians, like Elizabeth Anderson.<sup>52</sup> These scholars envision equality as an ideal civil

<sup>52</sup> Niko Kolodny, "Rule Over None II: Social Equality and the Justification of Democracy," *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 42(2014), p. 292; Elizabeth Anderson, "What is the Point of Equality?," *Ethics* 103(1999), pp. 287–337, "Democracy: Instrumental vs. Non-Instrumental Value", (in Christiano T. and Christman J. (eds.), *Contemporary Debates in Political Philosophy*, Oxford: Blackwell, 2009), pp. 213–227.

society which is characterized by the absence of inequalities of social relations, such as distinction in status or rank, hierarchy, oppression, domination and subordination.<sup>53</sup> According to Kolodny, the justification of democracy rests “on the fact that democracy is a particularly important constituent of a society in which people are related to one another as social equals, as opposed to social inferiors or superiors”.<sup>54</sup> In Kolodny’s view, if people have equal influence on the decision, they will also have equal standing in their political relations. In this way, the very presence of an equal distribution of political power during the initial stage of the decision-making process contributes to offsetting social inequality and neutralizing the hierarchical relation established by the presence of a ruler and the ruled.

The irreducibility of equality to democracy marks one of the main differences between necessary defences of democracy and political egalitarianism. Although democracy plays a key role in the relational account of equality, it is not reducible to equality. The reason is that democracy pertains to how the members of an egalitarian society would relate at the political level, but different kinds of social relations connect the members of an egalitarian society to one another. Therefore, to the extent that equality is considered to be an ideal society and different factors can generate domination and oppression among the members of a society, an equal distribution of political power is necessary but insufficient to achieve equality.<sup>55</sup> So, democracy is valuable for equality but it does not have the same value of equality. This conclusion fits the description of contributory values in Section I, according to which these values may not bear the value as that of the whole of which they are part.

In order to understand Kolodny’s and relational egalitarians’ conditional claim to democracy, two points should be noted. First, necessary relationships can be either conceptual or empirical. Conceptual necessary relationships are those between concepts, such as the one between the concept of being a man and that of being a bachelor. As these relationships depend on the meaning of the concepts involved, they remain the same in all contexts of reference. In contrast, empirical necessary relationships relate facts or things to one another, such as the possible relation of trades with economic growth. But empirical necessary relationships remain the same in all contexts because of how things or facts relate to each other in every single context.

These considerations on the nature of the necessary relationships are extremely important to understand how necessary defences of democracy stand in relation to the debate on the justification of democracy because the truth of conceptual and empirical necessary relations should be established in different ways. This brings me to my second point. Empirical correlations can be considered true only if they are backed up by evidence. We do not need evidence to conclude that the concept of being a man is a necessary part of the concept of being a bachelor, but we need evidence to conclude that trades are necessary for economic growth.

<sup>53</sup> Michael Walzer, *Spheres of Justice: A Defence of Pluralism and Equality* (Oxford: Martin Robertson, 1983), p. 29.

<sup>54</sup> Niko Kolodny, “Rule Over None II: Social Equality and the Justification of Democracy,” p. 287.

<sup>55</sup> Niko Kolodny, “Rule Over None II: Social Equality and the Justification of Democracy,” p. 306.

When relational egalitarians talk about the value of democracy for equality, they seem to imply an empirical correlation between democracy and equality. Anderson clarifies that her normative theory of equality has descriptive connotations when she claims that the point of equality can be understood only with regards to “how egalitarian political movements have historically conceived of their aims”.<sup>56</sup> Kolodny is less explicit than Anderson about what kind of relationship he supports between democracy and equality. However, he clarifies that in nonideal circumstances, equal distribution of influence could take us further away from social equality. “For example, giving greater opportunity to influence political decisions to members of groups whose acceptance as social equals is under threat in other domains, especially as a kind of temporary or remedial measure, may be warranted”.<sup>57</sup> This may suggest that, according to Kolodny, the relationship between democracy and social equality is not conceptual because in principle it can vary from context to context.

This is problematic because if Kolodny and relational egalitarians are interested in the practical relation of social equality and democracy, their claims will require the support of empirical evidence. Unlike the debate on the intrinsic and instrumental views of democracy, the success of necessary approaches depends on the likelihood of a society becoming more egalitarian, without, at the same time, democratizing. However, it is unclear whether democracy is needed to ensure egalitarian social relations. First, several scholars defend the contrasting claim that an egalitarian distribution of rights and resources, and not political equality, is a precondition to an egalitarian social order. Following John Stuart Mill, John Rawls argues that economic inequalities are what should be controlled in order to prevent one part of the population from dominating the rest.<sup>58</sup> Also, Will Kymlicka maintains that “one way to ensure that social relationships are egalitarian is to ensure that individuals have roughly equal shares of resources, and hence enter society on a roughly equal footing”.<sup>59</sup> The same claim has been recently defended by Christian Schemmel.<sup>60</sup>

Second, to my knowledge, the supposed influence of political equality on social equality has yet to be established. Research in economics suggests that in countries where inequality has declined, two main factors have contributed to this decline: public transfers of economic means to the poor and the expansion of education. No special mention is given to political equality. For instance, since the 1990s, the rise in public expenditure on education all over Latin America and the Caribbean is said

<sup>56</sup> Elizabeth Anderson, “What is the Point of Equality?” *Ethics*, 103(1999), pp. 312.

<sup>57</sup> Niko Kolodny, “Rule Over None II: Social Equality and the Justification of Democracy,” p. 309.

<sup>58</sup> John Rawls, *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement* (Edited by Erin Kelly, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press), pp. 130–131.

<sup>59</sup> Will Kymlicka, *Contemporary Political Philosophy* (2nd ed., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 197. For a recent defense of the relation of an egalitarian distribution of rights and resources and social equality, see Christian Schemmel, “Why Relational Egalitarians Should Care about Distributions,” *Social Theory and Practice* 37(2011), pp. 365–90.

<sup>60</sup> See Christian Schemmel, “Why Relational Egalitarians Should Care about Distributions,” pp. 365–90.

to have caused increases in secondary school enrolment and completion rates, and this became a major cause of the fall in wage inequality.<sup>61</sup>

The above considerations are not sufficient to dismiss the claims of relational egalitarians and Kolodny. As a matter of fact, the focus of these research programmes is not the correlation between political equality and social equality. So, the supposed influence of political equality on social equality has yet to be established. However, the present considerations should make us more suspicious of these necessary defences of democracy. Relational egalitarians and Kolodny should disambiguate the kinds of relation between social equality and democracy they are defending. And if, as I suspect, they refer to an empirical relation, more evidence of a correlation between political equality and equality is in order to substantiate their claim.

## 5.2 Non-necessary Defences of Democracy

Unlike Kolodny and relational egalitarians, Eric Beerbohm and Jeffry Howard defend the contributory but non-necessary relation of democracy with a valuable ideal.<sup>62</sup> According to Beerbohm, democracy is valuable because it is an important constituent of agency relationships in which citizens stand in a relation of mutual accountability to one another.<sup>63</sup> Democracy is part but not reducible to the desired agency relationships because “[w]hat we owe each other as persons is not exhausted by what we owe each other as citizens”.<sup>64</sup> However, the outcome-independent qualities of the democratic decisional process contribute to ensuring that members of society are connected through a system of shared liability.<sup>65</sup>

Beerbohm excludes the instrumental value of the democratic procedure because, in his view, “democratic procedures are appealing because of the way they structure our relations, not because of their instrumental effects”.<sup>66</sup> This suggests that, if citizens democratically decide to strip some members of the society of their rights, the primary source of the wrongness of this action does not lie in the state of affairs that the democratic decision can bring about, but in the presence of impaired relations between the citizens through the democratic rule.<sup>67</sup>

Unlike Kolodny and relational egalitarians, Beerbohm is clear that democracy is not necessarily valuable. In fact, as discussed in Section II, Beerbohm believes that, under certain conditions, democracy has no value or even negative value when it

<sup>61</sup> See Ferreira F., Messina J., Rigolini J., López-Calva L., Lugo M. and Vakis R., *Economic Mobility and the Rise of the Latin American Middle Class* (Washington, D.C.: World Bank Publications, 2012); López-Calva Luis F. and Nora Lustig, *Declining Inequality in Latin America: A Decade of Progress?* (Harrisonburg: Brookings Institute Press, 2010).

<sup>62</sup> Eric Beerbohm, *In Our Name: The Ethics of Democracy*; Jeffry Howard, “The Labors of Justice: Democracy, Respect, and Judicial Review,” *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy* 22(2019), pp. 179–199.

<sup>63</sup> Eric Beerbohm, *In Our Name: The Ethics of Democracy*, p. 37.

<sup>64</sup> Eric Beerbohm, *In Our Name: The Ethics of Democracy*, p. 29.

<sup>65</sup> Eric Beerbohm, *In Our Name: The Ethics of Democracy*, p. 29.

<sup>66</sup> Eric Beerbohm, *In Our Name: The Ethics of Democracy*, p. 37.

<sup>67</sup> Eric Beerbohm, *In Our Name: The Ethics of Democracy*, p. 42.

contributes to perpetrating serious injustice.<sup>68</sup> Democracy is, therefore, a constituent but not a necessary part of the desired set of valuable agency relations.

Howard takes a similar stand. Howard argues that “[w]hat has value is the genuine exercise of moral agency” and democracy is valuable because it institutionalizes the idea that the citizens are equally responsible for achieving and maintaining a just society.<sup>69</sup> In other words, the democratic decisional process is uniquely respectful toward citizens’ moral power. Yet, democracy is not reducible to the full realization of individuals’ moral power because other factors besides an inclusive democratic decision-making process are required to serve the aims of liberal justice.<sup>70</sup>

Like Beerbohm, Howard does not leave space for ambiguities on the non-necessary relation between democracy and the agents’ duty to justice. Democracy’s value depends on the fact that, in most of the cases, agents can live up to their moral duties of promoting and maintaining liberal justice by engaging in democratic practices.<sup>71</sup> However, in some cases democracy does not contribute to justice; on the contrary, democratic decision-making can turn against justice. In these cases, democracy loses its contributory value because “[t]he decision to enact injustice cannot qualify as a genuine exercise of the first moral power at all”.<sup>72</sup> Thus, the non-instrumental qualities of the democratic decisional process are valuable as they enable citizens to discharge the duties they owe to others, but democracy can lose its value when this does not happen.

Howard goes on to point out that as long as democracy is a constituent but not a necessary part of a just society, we must be open to deviations from the democratic rule if these deviations can advance the achievement of justice in a significant and non-trivial way.<sup>73</sup> Democracy is, therefore, “a default rule – a rule to which we standardly defer provided there is no compelling justification for deviating from it in the case at hand”.<sup>74</sup>

Contributory but non-necessary justifications of democracy are less burdensome to defend than necessary defences of democracy. The reason is that, as noted before, these justifications do not imply that democracy contributes to a just society in any socio-economic context. For this reason, to substantiate their claims, proponents of the contributory and non-necessary democracy’s value should only show that democracy has a contributory function only under some circumstances.

Another way to value democracy non-instrumentally is to value it symbolically, just as we saw in the case of the flag of the political party discussed in Section I.

<sup>68</sup> Eric Beerbohm, *In Our Name: The Ethics of Democracy*, p. 36–37.

<sup>69</sup> Jeffrey Howard, “The Labors of Justice: Democracy, Respect, and Judicial Review,” p. 186.

<sup>70</sup> Jeffrey Howard, “The Labors of Justice: Democracy, Respect, and Judicial Review,” p. 182.

<sup>71</sup> Jeffrey Howard, “The Labors of Justice: Democracy, Respect, and Judicial Review,” p. 196, note 17.

<sup>72</sup> Jeffrey Howard, “The Labors of Justice: Democracy, Respect, and Judicial Review,” p. 186.

<sup>73</sup> According to Howard, these deviations should be democratically justified. First, because of the pervasive fallibility of human beings’ evaluations, and second, because it is difficult to believe that the duty of justice can justify permanent deviations in practice (Jeffrey Howard, “The Labors of Justice: Democracy, Respect, and Judicial Review,” p. 182–183).

<sup>74</sup> Jeffrey Howard, “The Labors of Justice: Democracy, Respect, and Judicial Review,” p. 182.

In this case, democracy would be symbolically valuable insofar as it represents an important ideal. Here, unlike the instrumental approach to democracy, the value of democracy does not depend on its ability to bring about certain outcomes, but rather on the representation of valuable ideals in the features of democratic institutions. To my knowledge, at present, no scholar has defended the symbolic value of democracy. So, I will not discuss this claim further.

This section has identified and corrected a mistaken assumption in Western democratic theory. Many debates in Western democratic theory wrongly assume that there are only two possible approaches to democracy's value, intrinsic and instrumental views of democracy. I have shown that other coherent defences of democracy require equal recognition. Necessary and contributory but non-necessary defences of democracy are distinctive and independent categories in the contemporary debate on democracy's value. Recognizing these two kinds of democracy's justifications would make clear the similarities and the tensions among several competing contemporary views and advance debates at a faster pace. This will benefit the entire discipline.

## **6 Conclusion: Implication for the Debate on the Justification of Democracy**

By connecting some relevant axiological distinctions to the arguments for democracy, this paper has laid out a conceptual framework that can be adopted by all theorists for sharpening debates on democracy. The need for such investigation was based on confusion in the field on the basic terms of the debate. Such confusion undermines the debate on different approaches to democracy. The clear set of terms I have suggested aims to overcome this deadlock by refocusing democratic theory in several ways. It provides democratic theorists who are involved in debates on the justification of democracy with a clear understanding of the implications of their approaches to democracy and reveals where and how the engagement between alternative approaches should take place.

The paper has shown that Western democratic theory wrongly assumes that there are only two possible kinds of justification of democracy and proposed a third category of democracy's value. The paper has also criticized current arguments on democracy. For instance, I have shown that one way to criticize intrinsic defences of democracy is to either argue that equality and liberty are not the most important standards to assess decision-making processes or show that democratic procedures are not manifestations of these two valuable ideals. Another contribution of this paper is it to explain how theorists can develop stronger justifications of democracy. Instrumentalists, for example, should clarify why certain political outcomes are more valuable than others and why the achievement of certain political outcomes must be more important than certain ideals that can be realized through democratic processes. In relation to the necessary defences of democracy, I have argued that common intuitions are insufficient to establish the correlation between social equality and democracy. Necessary claims to democracy may need to be supported by empirical evidence of the correlation between political equality and social

equality. In short, my conceptual framework of the values of democracy has shown that the similarities between different approaches to democracy are less than what we have expected, but the points for engagements are much more than what we have believed.

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