

Theorising the Democratic State

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Lecture 7

Political theory and justification

Wollstonecraft
1797



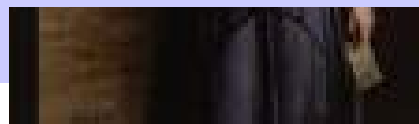
Elizabeth Cady-
Stanton 1815-1902



Catharine Macaulay
1731-1791



Harriet Taylor 1807-1858



Elizabeth A
1919-2001

Hannah Pitkin
b.1931

Both de Tocqueville and Mill endorse democratic society and government:

de Tocqueville:

as a 'providential fact': a fact of the matter about historical development – increasing social equality, increasingly powerful demands for popular sovereignty and participation in the government of society

Mill:

as a justified principle: popular sovereignty, representative government, individual autonomy, utilitarian equality, social justice

Problems of Democratic Politics 1.



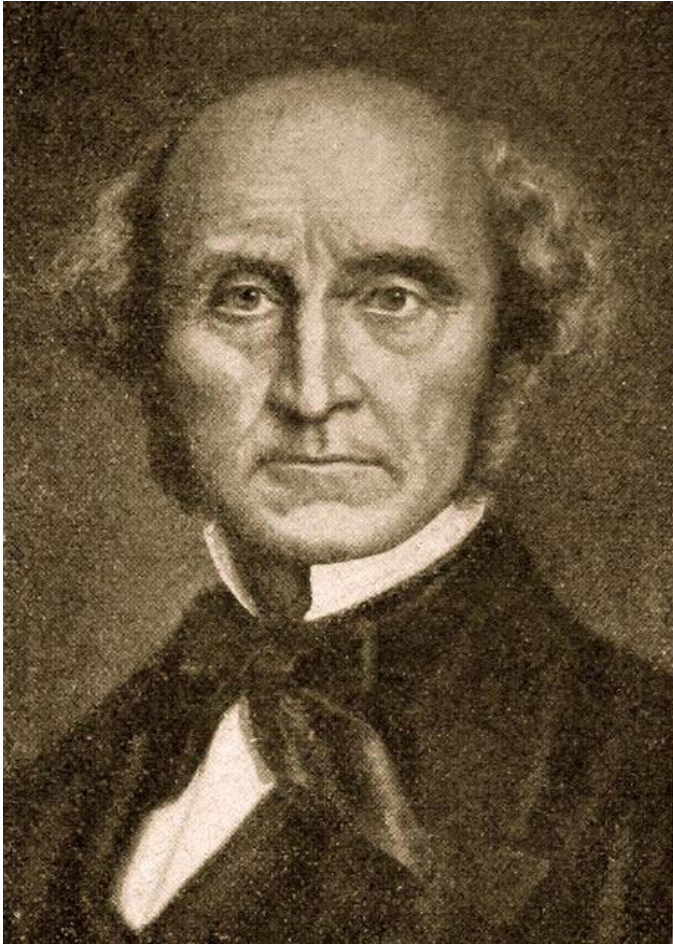
Democratic Society and Authoritarian Government

Equality of individual status

leads to individualism – concern with own private affairs;

greater demands on government for public goods

decreased oversight over governmental offices and institutions



The tyranny of the Majority

Acceptance of centralised coercive authority – uniform public policy – as ‘price’ of privacy and individualised freedom [de Tocqueville]

Informal and formal sanctions against those who are different [Mill]

These sanctions can be *formal* (eg state laws governing social conduct)

or *informal* (eg shunning or being rude to individuals who are different from the norm)

Social and political safeguards against tyrannical government

- 1. Institutional separation of powers (sovereign, legislative, executive, administrative, judicial);*
- 2. Local organisation of local affairs – local self-reliance and organisational capacity;*
- 3. Citizen character: cooperation, public participation, reasoned deliberation, capacity to hold authority to account;*
- 4. Sociability: voluntary associations, trustworthiness, friendship, truth – ie the accumulation of social capital, and political capacity.*

What are we doing when we
do political theory?

Prescription v Description

- How things ought to be; the justification of states of affairs and goals.
- How things are: what is their nature? how do they work?

Prescription	Description
Norm	Fact
Ought	Is

What is the relationship between is (actuality) and ought (normativity)?

- They are independent:
 - cannot logically derive an ought from an is;
 - cannot logically infer an is from an ought.

NOTE:

people DO derive 'oughts' from 'is's' and vice versa:

eg criticism that Dahl's pluralist normative commitment affected his observation of pluralism in his study of political power and decision making (knowledge of 'is' from 'ought')

eg criticism that Schumpeter's observation that individuals in capitalist societies are self-interested led him to justify in his democratic theory the self-interest of individuals ('is' justified as an 'ought')

1. knowledge of 'is' from 'ought'

2. 'is' justified as an 'ought'

3. *'Oughts' can CONSTRUCT 'is's':*

eg view that it is acceptable for people to be individualistic and self-interested can conduce to a setting in which people are individualistic and self-interested

(or, one generation's 'ought' can become future generations' 'is')

*The relationship between 'ought' (normativity) and
'can' (possibility)*

Does 'ought' imply 'can'?

Does 'cannot' imply 'ought not'?

– depends *why* we 'cannot':

What if we can't now, but with structural or system or individual changes we could

(Could: conditionality)

Is possibility relevant to 'ought'?

Perhaps... even if it is impossible that what ought to be case be the case (needs met, justice achieved, democracy realised) that does not alter what ought to be the case.



Prescription and Justification

“No Borders, No States, No Wars”

Modes of justification of principles or institutions

Inference Focus	Consequentialist, teleological, instrumentalist	Deontological, deductive, inferential	Character- based, virtue based
Procedural: Procedures & institutions	<i>Schumpeter</i>		
Substantive: Values and principles	<i>de Tocqueville (liberty, equality)</i>	<i>Mill On Liberty</i>	<i>Rousseau Social Contract</i>
Constitutive or Expressive Symbols			<i>Some Deliberative democrats</i>

Ideal v non-ideal prescription

<i>Possibility irrelevant</i>	<i>Ideal constrained by possibility</i>
<i>Moral?</i>	<i>Political?</i>

Perfectionism	Non-perfectionism
<i>Humans as progressive beings;</i> <i>Human history as progressive</i>	<i>Imperfect or 'fallen' nature of man;</i> <i>Human history as repetitive</i>

	Ideal	Non-ideal
Perfectionist	Habermasian Ideal Deliberation	de Tocqueville's associational democracy
Non- perfectionist	?Schumpeter's new model of democracy – <i>An ideal type</i>	Schumpeter's new model of democracy - <i>as a description of capitalist consumer society</i>



Elizabeth Anscombe
1919-2001



Hannah Arendt 1906-
1975



Mary Wollstonecraft
1759-1797



Hannah Pitkin
b.1931



Catharine Macaulay
1731-1791



Harriet Taylor 1807-
1858



**Elizabeth Cady-
Stanton** 1815-1902