DE GRUYTER

Garrett Thomson, Scherto Gill

BEYOND INSTRUMENTALISED POLITICS

RE-CONCEPTUALISING PUBLIC GOVERNANCE

RE-IMAGINING PUBLIC GOVERNANCE

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Garrett Thomson, Scherto Gill

Beyond Instrumentalised Politics

Re-Imagining Public Governance

Opportunities for Innovation and Promises for Transformation

Edited by
Scherto Gill

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Beyond Instrumentalised Politics

Re-Conceptualising Public Governance

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Preface

This book comprises an extended argument in favour of participatory democracy as opposed to the representative system. Its main concern consists in showing how representative democracy necessarily tends to instrumentalise persons or treat them as mere means of instrumental value. We argue that a representative system cannot constitute good governance precisely because of this inherent tendency to dehumanise. In contrast to an instrumentalised politics that alienates and silences people, a well-designed participatory system would engage and listen.

Such an argument relies on some important normative assumptions, which we define and support. In addition, to make a case for participatory democracy also requires us to reconceive consensus and social epistemology, and this includes showing how dialogues and collective healing might support the process of consensus building.

Many writers conceive of participatory practices and institutions, such as local assemblies, as add-ons or as reforms to representative democracy. This does not address the fundamental defects of current political systems. Therefore, we argue that participatory democracy should function as a whole decentralised system of governance. To make this case, we show how the major practical challenges to participatory democracy might be overcome. For instance, we envisage how such a structure might work well through the design and practice of appropriate institutions. In summary, in this book, our sustained argument provides a robust conceptual framework for a participatory system of governance.

This means that this book doesn't review or appreciatively critique historical and existing participatory practices and institutions from around the world. Nor does it draw on evidence from the relevant fields and examine participatory movements, either as calls to reform the existing system or as illustrations of what might replace it. Instead, we have solely focused on developing and defending a framework for a new political structure.

However, we do recognise the importance of worldwide examples of consensus-based participatory practices, and how important and necessary these emergent practices are in contributing to the transformation of democratic systems. Therefore, we accept this lack of case studies as a limitation of this book, amongst others.

We would like to take the opportunity to acknowledge the support from organisations and individuals. First, we are deeply grateful for colleagues at the Guerrand-Hermès Foundation for Peace, the discussions with whom have been a major source of inspiration for this work. Likewise, our gratitude goes to the Pure-

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It is for the future generations to whom we dedicate this book.

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Introduction
Re-Conceptualising Public Governance

This book provides some conceptual and evaluative foundations for re-imagining public governance processes and for re-designing the public institutions required for good governance. It recognises that there has been burgeoning research within the fields of social and political sciences, especially in international relations, and sociology, that investigates the failures of some democratic governments. At the same time, it also notes that writers have identified some common causes of the breakdowns in democracy. However, these analyses, however, have little to offer as alternatives to the current political systems. Although democracy has been seen as the only antidote to forces such as autocracy and fascism, these reforms rarely touch the underlying systemic factors and structural conditions that have resulted in the problems experienced by many democracies. These include, for instance, the fact that politics has usually instrumentalised peoples and their votes, and that political antagonism has been accepted as part of the culture of democracy. They also point to the reality whereby political institutions do not respect all peoples *equally*, and seldom take collective human well-being seriously as a public interest. Indeed, political reforms tend to further deepen the disparity between the political and economic elites and the rest of the society.

Hence, the proposal outlined in this book reconceptualises public governance. Instead of rehearsing the existing critiques and suggesting more reforms, it systematically re-envisages the nature of governance, democratic process, and political institutions. It seeks to answer questions such as: "What kinds of governance processes and institutions do we need in the 21st Century?"; "What are the underlying evaluative principles that form the basis for the design of these processes and institutions?"; and "How might ordinary people participate *peacefully* in democratic decision-making and consensus building facilitated by these institutions?"

Such a project requires a clear and thorough understanding of the normative basis of politics, e.g. what matters most to human life, and how to conceptualise politics according to what matters. For this reason, we have decided to return to the drawing board. The values highlighted in this book will serve as design principles for a new form of public governance. They can also inspire our re-imagining of public institutions in innovative ways. The latter will draw on our diagnosis of what has gone wrong with existing institutions and why. Both have implications for the ways that people ought to engage in public governance. They can also provide insights into the responsibilities and processes of local and national governments, as well as those of international, transnational and global organisations.

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The Impasse of Representative Democracy

The weaknesses of representative democracy are well documented. To illustrate these weaknesses, political scientists and sociologists have analysed how current models of representative or electoral democracy have sustained authoritarian regimes, and even allowed the rise of autocrats and dictators (Flowles, 2022; Walter, 2022; Snyder, 2021; Applebaum, 2020; Runciman, 2018). These analyses have reflected on some of the important political upheavals in 20th century, including those involving Fujimori in Peru, Chavez in Venezuela, Erdoğan in Turkey, Orbán in Hungary, Modi in India, Putin in Russia, and Trump in the US (e.g. Ziblatt and Levitsky, 2018). In particular, research has recognised the fact that the demise of democracy is often not the result of violent revolutions, such as a military coup, but also occurs through widespread manipulation of the public's votes. It points to the phenomenon that representative democracy doesn't always seem to work. The question is: Why?

Representative democracy is characterised by citizens voting to elect political candidates. In this process, myriad strategies are implemented to persuade voters and swing votes.[1] This is typically a process of instrumentalisation in which citizens' votes are used to elect leaders, who ultimately serve the interests of political elites. Because of instrumentalisation, representative democracy reinforces the assumption that elections are necessarily political *fights* or *battles* which will end up with winners and losers. According to this assumption, voters must take sides and support one set of political promises against another. In the amidst of such political campaigns, the very idea of a collective understanding of the common interests or shared vision for common good is often lost.

Through the idea that elections are either won or lost, representative democracy heralds political division, and political processes become power-struggles that can easily engender a culture of antagonism. During election campaigns, the erosion of civility is a widespread phenomenon. As a result, aggressive polarisation and even violent demonisation of the other are amongst typical practices. Following the election, to sustain power, the ruling party tends to mobilise procedures to guarantee its agenda and self-interest. Meanwhile, those who lose the election have lost their voice in public decision-making. The instrumentalisation of politics partly consists in deliberate strategies and measures to weaken democratic institutions, such as the court and the media, and to influence public opinions.

1 In practice, political lobbying is also influenced by campaign donors, politicians irresponsible and unrealistic promises to collect voters', and likewise, the biases and ignorance of voters about which politicians and policies to support, making some voters easy targets of lobbying, and manipulation.

Whilst, ideally, representative democracy would translate citizens' collective interests into public policies aimed at the common good, in contrast, elected representatives are most likely to serve some groups' interests at the expense of others. Usually, the least well-served consists in the larger part of a society, especially the marginalised and working people, as well as those from minority and other vulnerable backgrounds. Ironically, it is often the concerns of these groups that are typically weaponised for sake of collecting votes. Thus, those who voted for the leaders find themselves once again at the receiving end of disappointment and became politically disenchanted. Those who are disadvantaged by instrumentalised politics continue to be the main victims of the political process, despite the new façades and pledges.

Today, more people are beginning to recognise that their votes have been instrumentalised, and worse, that their voices and trust have been exploited and abused by a ruling elite.[2] Such disappointment with representative democracy and alienation from the electoral process often drives voters to give up on political engagement because they have concluded that voting is futile. In other words, they are losing faith in democracy itself. Therefore, the phenomenon of low turn-out at elections has become more common.[3] Hand-in-hand with this disillusionment, the idea that elections as expressions of democracy is felt as a mere myth.

A Few Alternatives

Although the factors that underlie the erosion of representative democracy are known, political scientists, researchers and commentators have proposed few remedies to this contemporary malaise. Suggestions include improvements to the electoral system, such as proportional representation which allows the demographics of subgroups (e.g. regions, or political parties) of an electorate to be respectively reflected in the elected body; increased tolerance between the political oppositions, and more institutional checks and balances (Ziblatt and Levitsky, 2018). As already highlighted, such proposals typically constitute reforms to existing institutions.

2 According to Pew Research Center's 2019 data, in major European countries, citizens are increasingly dissatisfied with how democracy works in their countries: (43% of Germans, 55% of Brits, 51% of the French, 70% of Italians, 81% of the Spanish). https://www.pewglobal.org/2019/04/29/many-across-the-globe-are-dissatisfied-with-how-democracy-is-working

3 There is, however, an exception in countries that practise direct democracy successfully, such as in Switzerland. It appears that the more voice people are given in politics, the less often they turn out to vote.

More importantly, few are able to propose radical or creative visions beyond representative democracy. The few alternatives that are proposed are in effect flawed. Let us briefly review some, starting with the least radical.

'Lottocracy' refers to political systems in which decisions are made by a group of people selected by sortition, such as a lottery. In contemporary politics, sortition usually takes the form of people's assemblies or Citizens' Assemblies.[4] Sortition has the advantages of being inclusive and non-partisan, and can help alleviate the antagonism inherent in the typical representative electoral democratic systems. Accordingly, lottocracy seems to be able to empower ordinary citizens to rise above self-interest and act upon their responsibility in taking a decision on behalf of other citizens, and actively resist any attempts to manipulate the outcome of their political agency (Landemore, 2020).

There are a few recent examples to demonstrate that citizens assemblies can help make meaningful policy recommendations to the national government.[5] In these examples, lottocracy is made possible owing to a number of factors, such as the lack of lobbying groups' influence, low risks of bribery and corruption, and well-designed and skilfully-facilitated processes of consensus building. These factors seem to enable a group of randomly selected everyday people from diverse backgrounds to come together and grapple with a complex decision that affects the society in which they live.

However, necessarily, sortition is restricted to being only one limited element in a democratic system. It cannot replace what the government does, because any consensus reached through sortition will only constitute recommendations to an elected assembly or government. In other words, recommendations made through lottocratic processes don't bind the assembly's view.

A variant of citizens' decision-making is preferential voting (Brennan and Landemore, 2021). In this case, all people can vote. When voting, each person will register the order of their preferences for each of the candidates, allowing preferences to be counted together in the case where no candidate receives a majority of first preferences. Furthermore, along with their preferences, it is suggest-

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4 Different countries have used different terms to refer to Citizens' Assembly. For instance, in Canada, it is called "Citizens' Reference Panels", and the process "civic lottery"; in Ireland, Citizens' Assembly; in Iceland, National Assembly; in Germany, Planungszellen or Bürgerräte; in Holland, Burgerforum, and so forth. There are other names too, such as Citizens' Constitutional Conventions, Peoples' Senates, Consensus Conferences, Peoples' Juries, Mini Publics.

5 e.g. Iceland national assembly in 2009; Irish people's assembly in 2016. In 2022, the European Union has enshrined Citizens Assembly in its decision-making process. Most recently, a Global People's Assembly was proposed to seek solidarity in advancing UN SDGs, e.g. sustainable equality of all.

ed that the voters can list their demographics. To ascertain political ignorance, a preferential voting approach even asks voters to take a brief test to demonstrate their level of proficiency in political knowledge. Once done, the crunched data (based on these three sets of information) will be used as the basis to determine how the public from different backgrounds have their preferences registered and taken into account (Reilly, Ellis and Reynolds, 2005). Preferential voting, such as those practised in Belgium and the Netherlands, notwithstanding the different models applied, can formally impact an election outcome (Wauters, Thijssen and Van Erkel, 2020).

Another alternative proposed is 'epistocracy' (Brennan, 2016). Epistocracy was first proposed by Plato in the form of guardianship.[6] It is a political system in which society is governed by those who are wiser or more learned, and whose work is directed at serving the common good of the people rather than at serving their own interests. This approach recognises the importance of knowledge and understanding in decision-making process.[7] Thus, epistocracy resonates with some African endogenous governance practices in which a wise leader, such as a chief, or a group of wise leaders, e.g. a council of elders, would preside over a community's decision-making process for optimal outcome.

Contemporary forms of epistocracy advocate the distribution of decision-making powers according to the relevant capacities of citizens. Some propose restricted suffrage (Brennan, 2016), and others plural voting.[8] These are based on the assumption that most citizens who take part in voting are not competent enough to understand well the choices they make. For epistocrats, therefore, the entitlement to participate in democratic decision-making should be limited to those who are sufficiently competent to vote. The phenomena that Donald Trump was elected, the British people opted for Brexit, and far-right candidates were voted into office in many western countries, have seemingly proved to the espistocrats that most voters are incompetent, if not naïve and malleable (ibid.). Although training in politics and citizenship education may improve people's knowledge and enhance their political participation, in an epistocracy, voting will necessarily be restricted to sophisticated participants, who are often the elites (Brennan, 2018). Thus, epistocracy risks becoming a system that endorses oligarchy whereby the politically savvy and competent make decisions based upon what they believe to be important, whilst those who are naïve about policy processes and politically unskilled remain voiceless. An electorate restricted in such a way means that the

6 Plato, *Republic*

7 Indeed, Plato advises that the participation of the "motley horde" should be "compulsorily excluded".

8 For which John Stuart Mill was a proponent.

lived realities of the greater majority will tend to be neglected, and their interests undefended.

Also seeking to promote the role of elite leaders is political meritocracy, a political system that aims to select public officials who have proven superior abilities and virtues (Chan, 2013). Historically, in China, meritocracy was applied to identifying civil servants through public examinations. Though in contrast to representative democracy through public vote, in theory, political meritocracy does not reject the values of democracy. In practice, political meritocracy is a top-down system, with democratic practices confined to the very bottom, for instance in villages and within small organisations. This means the political will of the top governing body, whose power may be concentrated in the hands of as few as one person, can preside over the will and interests of the people.

Despite its limitations, some theorists have regarded the contemporary *China Model* of political meritocracy as a potentially viable alternative to democracy (Bell, 2015). Amongst the quoted merits is its capacity to transcend the flaws of the 'one person, one vote' electoral system of representative democracy.[9] Likewise, through policy integration, political meritocracy appears to be able to avoid prolonged political debates and deliberation, thus allowing the national government to act/react more readily and concertedly to address pressing challenges, such as climate change. Furthermore, despite the particularities of the Chinese context, China's achievement in lifting a large part of its population out of absolute economic poverty has been seen as an expression of political meritocracy's 'success'.

Political meritocracy corresponds with classic Chinese political philosophy whereby the leader must be a wise and learned person with superior governance knowledge, professional expertise, educational qualifications, and personal virtues. It has been a consistent Chinese political ideology. The continuous practice of meritocracy makes it difficult to evaluate its progress, not least against other forms of political systems, such as electoral democracy. However, it has become clear in recent decades that political meritocracy in the *China Model* can be vulnerable in the hands of authoritarian rulers who have the tendency to become politically oppressive (Mang, 2020). Such a system can be dominated by political manipulation and corruption, and political meritocracy itself is at risk of becoming dictatorship. Likewise, within such a system, people have little political engagement, and are largely excluded from political power (Bell, 2015).

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9 In practice, China applies a bottom-up electoral system whereby the National Congress is made up of delegates elected at local and provincial levels, based on political screening, professional expertise, educational qualification, and virtues. National Congress in turn elect members of the Central Committee who oversees the party and governs the country.

Our review of a few so-called *alternatives* to representative democracy suggests that they are not viable alternatives. On the one hand, currently proposed reforms, such as preference voting, are simply amendments to the existing system, rather than genuine alternatives to the underlying structural relations between institutions. In other words, they don't go far enough. On the other hand, the few supposed alternatives, e. g. lottocracy, epistocracy, or political meritocracy, seem to take us further away from democracy. Although these non-representative approaches appear to use democratic language to frame their practices, in reality, these proposals are heading in the wrong direction.

The Need for the Normative

It is well recognised that humanity is currently close to the brink of a precipice. Given this, we need to critically re-examine our political system. For this book, and in a theoretical context, we need to ask the question: how can we re-envisage democracy so as to overcome its malaises?[10] Such a question cannot evade normative issues, such as 'What is important?' and 'what is valuable?'

One of the recent paths explored by some academics concerns governance and the processes of decision-making. This shift, started in the 1980s, is rooted in a growing conviction of the need to study political practices apart from the electing of governments. These can be regarded broadly as forms of governance (Kohler-Koch and Rittberger, 2006). This turn towards governance might be due to a number of factors.

The first concerns the increased global interest in innovative governance practices at the grassroots level. These movements tend to be driven by a dissatisfaction with the *status quo*, such as the continued failures of democratic governments in both internal and international affairs; the growing suspicion of the capacity of representative democracies to select suitable leaders; and the frustration with politics drifting away from serving the common good and the interest of the majority. These grassroots movements therefore stress the processes of participatory decision-making and consensus-building rather than focusing on electing the right representatives (Pierre, 2000).

The second factor is the recent opportunities afforded by the development of information and communication technology (ICT) and the use of social media to

10 In reply, in the first chapter of the book, we review some of the arguments in favour of democracy and conclude that the most cogent lines of argumentation support a participatory form of democracy which constitutes a radical alternative to representative democracy.

enable more direct public engagement in policy-making (Bonsón, Royo, and Ratkai, 2015). Although online platforms have been subject to manipulation and abuse, the spaces offered by ICT and digital media for myriad forms of citizens' political involvement are enormous. Increasingly people recognise the possibility of sharing their voices and of exercising their civil responsibilities through engaging in meaningful conversations online. From urban planning, to crowdsourcing, to participating in local decision-making, the technology-assisted platforms have provided opportunities for citizens' active digital participation in governance (Russon and Carneiro, 2019).

The third factor is connected to the growing shared consciousness about human interconnectedness, reflected both in the field of research and in grassroots governance practices. This is an increased awareness that our globalised and shared ways of life are constituted in increasedsocial-economic-political activities. With such a shared consciousness, more people and communities have come to appreciate and embrace this interconnection and interdependence. They recognise the importance of diverse voices in policy-making and inclusion in communal and institutional decision processes. For instance, it is appreciated that multiple perspectives and different voices can enrich the collaboration and co-creation of solutions to address complex challenges (Gergen, 2009). The focus is therefore on exploring processes of decision-making and consensus-building in ways that are peaceful and non-antagonistic and involve more listening, dialogue, and deliberation.

Fourthly, there are increasing demands globally for new forms of governance in the light of the multiple crises confronting humanity as a whole.[11] These emergencies urge the political project to seek good governance processes that transcend traditional institutional boundaries and that allow peoples, communities and organisations to participate in decision-making.

The latter consists in the realisation that decision-making in a diverse range of institutions shares certain common features. How can an organisation with multiple stakeholders make decisions? Answers to this question will be similar in the context of corporations, educational institutions, non-for-profit organisations, as well as various government agencies. Therefore, interests are directed towards exploring governance processes and institutional procedures of decision-making.

Because of this relatively new shift, conceptions of governance are still emerging. Definitions are typically divided into two broad categories. One views gover-

11 These crises have been well-documented, including the failures of democracy as already mentioned: the climate crisis, the widening disparity between the elites and the powerful and the disenfranchised and vulnerable; the global financial crisis; the continued nuclear threat; and the widespread political antagonism which has repercussions in national and local politics.

nance as the actions of governments, such as what the government officials do in their formal capacities, including ministers, parliamentarians, heads of public institutions, and others who are assigned political power (Addink, 2019). In this sense, governance concerns *what* governments ought to do and *how* governments act in practice. The other regards governance as a coordinating function, such as providing processes for public decision-making at different levels (Kirby, 2021; Peters, 2011). The latter conception sees public governance as a wider realm which includes the roles that governments play. That is to say that governments *participate in* governance. Despite this distinction, the overarching conception of governance continues to require a shift away from power, e. g. hierarchy. One such effort defines governance as *steering*, a conception that lies at the root of its Greek etymology (kubernates, κυβερνήτης) (Deutsch, 1963). Similarly, the book *Oxford Handbook of Governance* highlights that governance should be concerned with the book.

> order and disorder, efficiency and legitimacy all in the context of the hybridization of modes of control that allow the production of fragmented and multidimensional order within the state, by the state, without the state, and beyond the state (Levi-Faur, 2016, 3).

However, the need for providing direction, order and control is ultimately a defence against the potential abuse of power. In other words, it doesn't succeed in moving away from power. Indeed, the late 20th century and early 21st century continue to witnessing the expansion of governance studies (especially in realm of higher education and urban and corporate governance) (ibid.). This expansion allowed more reflection on policy processes, the roles of institutions and the politics of economy. Hence, the definition of public governance includes markets and networks, as well as governments. (Bevir, 2012). These ideas were intended to describe a different political vista.

Admittedly, this transition from governmental politics to public governance and multidimensional engagement was promising as it sought to explore new forms of *governance.* It applies both in macro-spheres, such as international relations; and in micro-spheres, such as the communal and municipal policies and decisions. Thus, governance can now be understood multi-dimensionally as a *structure*, a *process*, a *mechanism* and a *strategy:*

> As a structure, governance signifies the architecture of formal and informal institutions; as a process it signifies the dynamics and steering functions involved in lengthy never-ending processes of policy-making; as a mechanism it signifies institutional procedures of decision-making, of compliance and of control (or instruments); finally, as a strategy it signifies the actors' efforts to govern and manipulate the design of institutions and mechanisms in order to shape choice and preferences (Levi-Faur, 2016, 8).

Notwithstanding these exciting advances, none of these dimensions offer an indication of what might constitute good governance. To reconceptualise the notion of governance requires a *normative* element. Without the normative, governance, processes, institutions, and practices will lack evaluative criteria in all these domains. Evaluative criteria determine what forms of governance are desirable and why. To evaluate governance processes and practices, it is necessary to have a clear sense of the direction in which these processes and practices *should* aim. For instance, the term 'governancing' has been put forward by sociologists who believe that a verb-form of the term is better than the noun-form, which limits 'governance' to governments. Governancing suggests decentralised and collaborative forms of governing (Barkay, 2009). But why are decentralised power and collaborative governance favoured here? Why are they better? The idea of better must be directed at the aims that governance should seek and why such aims are important.

That is to say, it is not enough to know the avowed aims of a political project or of governance institutions; it is necessary to know the values and principles that define what those aims *should* be. Afterall, we can have erroneous and harmful aims.

Re-Envisaging Good Public Governance

Against the above backdrop, this book sets out to answer questions such as "What constitutes good public governance?" This is a simple question, but it contains several parts. It requires that we understand what governance is. For example, how does governance differ from government, and what ought to be the relationship between governance and government. There are many different kinds of governance, such as school and corporate governance or healthcare governance. What makes governance public? Finally, we need to understand the word 'good' in this context. What counts good public governance? To respond to these questions, this book will put forward a number of novel arguments:

The first outlines the imperative of non-instrumentalisation whereby people, their vote and tvoice should not be instrumentalised in a political project. This is connected to the second one.

The second is the claim that persons are non-derivatively and non-instrumentally valuable, and argues that this claim should form the basis of a principle of equality. It contends that any political system consistent with such a principle would need to be a participatory democracy (as opposed to a representative democracy).

The third is the thesis that the main end of public governance is the well-being of persons consistent with our being part of the natural world. This end qualifies both the focus of political decisions and the normative characteristics of governance processes.

The fourth proposes that any governance processes involved in participatory democracy ought to be peaceful and harmonious. Peacefulness does not imply that we should avoid that people have conflicting values and interests, nor avoid the tensions that arise because of contradictory understandings of the public interest. Instead, peacefulness denotes that consensus-building processes must be able to contain and calm the potentially aggressive tendencies in human interactions about such issues. This means for public governance to be good, it is necessary that the processes, such as dialogue, inclusive listening and deliberation, are non-antagonistic and harmonious.

These arguments present the fundamental ideas that underpin a new vision for good public governance. By articulating the practices, and institutions that follow from them, the overall arguments of the book offer a viable alternative to electoral or representative democracy. These principles form part of the conceptual pillars for participatory democracy and upon them which good public governance can be designed and implemented. For instance, as we shall illustrate, these principles enable us to provide an analysis of political epistemology and of democratic hermeneutics, including an outline of the different types of disagreement that can occur between people. On the basis of this, we describe processes of consensus-building. These include the creation of various types of public spaces for open and deep dialogue, and the facilitation processes that foster inclusive listening, deep sharing and mutual inquiry. Likewise, through these conceptual pillars of good governance, we can characterise the kinds of institutions necessary for scaling up participatory democracy from the local to the national, and even to the global. These descriptions form a shift away from centralised national government systems towards other more decentralised forms of governance oriented towards human well-being and communities' flourishing. In this manner, they allow us to reconsider the authority of the state in relation to public governance.

The Contours of the Book

The book is divided into six chapters with a conclusion, as well as this introduction. We will briefly review some of its main themes to give reader a panoramic vista.

Chapter 1: A Conceptual Framework for Understanding Good Governance

In the first chapter, we characterise the idea of good governance, and the different ways in which the word 'good' might modify 'governance'. We do so by identifying some basic normative principles. These are supported by a central thesis regarding what really matters or by an axiology, the study of what matters and why. It is important to note that axiology does not *per se* define morality which requires enforcement. The proposed axiology is that what matters non-derivatively is the life of conscious beings, such as persons. Because persons matter, their lives do and, because of this, the quality of their lived lives matters. This axiology implies that well-being is valuable because conscious persons are. As part of this axiology, we argue for four normative principles that underpin good governance:

The first is the principle of non-instrumentalisation. We explain what instrumentalisation is, and why it is pernicious that people are treated purely instrumentally. This explanation enables the distinction between different kinds of instrumentalisation such as: discrimination, exploitation, manipulation, alienation, marginalisation, and demonisation. For instance, instrumentalisation occurs when those who have gained power use it to retain power, rather than to improve the lives of people. It also occurs when propaganda and lobbying systematically manipulate the voices and votes of people, and are treated as a means for rulers to retain or gain power. In such cases, people are instrumentalised.

The second is the principle of equality, which is based on the claim that persons are non-derivatively valuable. This second principle maintains that all people are equally non-instrumentally valuable, which we take to be an implication of the axiology mentioned earlier with an additional condition of impartiality. We explain what the principle of equal value means, and what it doesn't mean, particularly in relation to various aspects of social justice. In brief, the principle of equality is more fundamental than claims based on human rights and moral fairness. No governance system should violate this minimal principle of equality. One can see that the current system of representative democracy leaves most people without voice, and in this way, it fails with respect to equality. In contrast, a participatory democratic system can respect all persons equally because it invites the participation of all. This forms an argument for participatory democracy which differs substantially both from causal justifications and from those based on liberty and autonomous self-governance.

A third is the principle of well-being. This maintains that political institutions should serve human well-being. We characterise well-being in a pluralistic and multidimensional way that transcends simplistic reductive definitions of the concept, typically portrayed in terms of utility and preference functions. We propose instead that well-being is valuable because persons are and, for this reason, non-

instrumentalisation must be an essential aspect of the notion of well-being. Well-being or *eudaimonia* thus forms the core of any understanding of the normative basis of political ends, which should be the end of political institutions.

The current political system inherently tends to serve and perpetuate existing power structures. Such an aim conflicts with the three principles. To these, we add a fourth, the principle of peacefulness. This principle claims that political institutions and processes should be peaceful. A democratic forum that respects all persons ought to enable people to participate in processes of consensus-building and decision-making, voice their concerns and share their ideas without reverting to antagonism. Indeed, violent political aggression is itself a form of instrumentalisation because it violates the equal value of all persons. Given the principle of peacefulness, it is clear that divisiveness, hostility, aggression and demonisation should not be inherent in the design of the political processes and institutions. Instead, political institutions will aim to create and facilitate public spaces that encourage civility; there should be dialogue, empathetic listening, caring for the perspectives of others, and mutual inquiry. Although conflict is always already embedded in the ebbs and flows of life, and is present in most human interactions, the principle of peacefulness will enable the cultivation of a political culture of respect, forgiveness and solidarity that permits peace in the midst of conflicts.

These four principles establish the overall trajectory of the book. We show what adherence to them would mean for political processes and institutions, and argue that they form necessary conditions for good governance institutions and the basis for participatory democracy.

Chapter 2: Consensus-Building

We have already argued that the concept of good governance requires a democracy that is directly participative, rather than representative. Now we argue that participatory democratic processes should be characterised by consensus-building (for certain kinds of propositions). To support this, we need to clear away some misconceptions about consensus. One misconception is that consensus seeking processes are inconsistent with pluralism. We argue that the reasons why pluralism in a society is important are quite compatible with communities seeking to make decisions by consensus. Plualistic beliefs make community decision processes rich, and pluralism without such processes is largely vacuous.

The term ‘consensus’ is usually taken to refer to agreement in belief about a set of propositions. In contrast to this assumption, we argue that such agreement is neither necessary nor sufficient for consensus. Consensus is a more complex notion, which involves a community making decisions *as a community* rather than

just individuals agreeing to a set of propositions. Consensus involves a set of social relations that allow people to decide harmoniously together, even when there is propositional disagreement. In the spirit of this idea, we examine some of the features and preconditions of consensus-building processes. This forms the basis for an argument that majority voting tends to instrumentalise the voice of the majority, as well as that of the minorities. Furthermore, such voting will always tend to split communities into majorities and minorities. These arguments also form the basis of a critique of lottocracy as a replacement for consensus-building. Lottocracy instrumentalises consensus-seeking by making it an information-processing mechanism to arrive efficiently to a specified outcome. Finally, we reply to some significant objections to consensus-building as an alternative to voting.

Chapter 3: Community Understanding

It is tempting to think of consensus-building mainly in terms of reducing belief-disagreement. We challenge this conception by arguing that understanding is a better concept for characterising consensus-building compared to knowing and believing. When appropriate, one should substitute ‘understanding’ for ‘agreement’, and ‘misunderstanding’ for ‘disagreement’. Belief-disagreement understood solely in terms of logical contradiction is inherently conflictual: either we agree or disagree, and in the latter case, at least one of us must be mistaken according to such a model. Furthermore, to characterise consensus-building primarily in these terms doesn’t allow for the possibility of misunderstandings that can be transcended. It doesn’t permit the possibility of building greater mutual understanding. For instance, even if two people disagree about some proposition, it is still possible that they can find other relevant propositions about which they can agree. Moreover, they can understand better why they disagree in ways that help remove the antagonism from their disagreement. The claim that understanding is primary allows us to explore the importance of collective epistemic virtues. In turn, this permits us to ask how these virtues might be nurtured through dialogue.

To understand the power of dialogue, language must be conceived as much more than a tool for practical communication between individuals. Language also defines our experiential world, and thereby it allows us to enter the experiential world of others, so that we can see things from their point of view. For this reason, in Chapter 3, we systematically examine the nature of communication in terms of its linguistic, pragmatic and relational aspects. This analysis helps us classify different kinds of misunderstanding and their corresponding remedies. From this analysis, we identify one especially pernicious kind of misunderstanding based on the systematic misreading of other people’s intentions: the tendency to

attribute good intentions to oneself and ill intentions to others. We show how this propensity can escalate into polarisation. Dialogues can diminish the propensity to attribute ill intentions to others, and we characterise dialogue by distinguishing it from debate, discussion and diatribe. We also separate dialogue from various forms of communication and processes aimed at conflict transformation, such as mediation, negotiation, group problem-solving and conflict-resolution. Dialogues are distinct because they seek greater mutual understanding partly for its own sake.

Chapter 4: Consensus-Building in Practice

In this chapter, we answer the challenge that building consensus is impractical, too difficult and too demanding. In part, we respond by outlining the preconditions for successful consensus-building processes, such as inclusive participation, peaceful communication and active listening. We show why dialogues are necessary to enable these preconditions, and how such dialogues can be constructed. We distinguish four kinds of dialogues: deep dialogues; collective healing; trust-building; and belief exploration.

The first kind concerns understanding others, especially their life narratives insofar as they contribute to the formation of their political views. People's political attitudes are shaped by their experiences of being privileged or being exploited; or of being esteemed or being undervalued by others. People's political attitudes are also defined by their sense of entitlement, and by their perception of others concerning fairness. Even ruling and elite groups may feel victimised in an antagonistic political system. The first dialogue-process also includes the perceptions that people have of themselves as members of a group. Such dialogue allows us to understand how others perceive situations of conflict, and it invites us to enter the phenomenological realities of their point of view.

The second kind of dialogue consists in collective healing, which includes healing the wounds of the past. Owing to past wounds, groups in a community may tend to remain antagonistically separated. Unacknowledged historical grievances and continued structural oppression result in intergenerational trauma, which has never had a chance to be recognised or attended to. Collective healing can contribute to transcending the victim-vs-aggressor dichotomy by shifting self-identification away from the parochial identifications towards our common humanity: I am a human person prior to my belonging to this or that social group. Through dialogue, my self-identification may shift. In this way. the healing process enables us to understand others and their lives in ways that help transcend the dynamics of victim-vs-perpetrator relations.

The third kind of dialogue pertains to trust-building. This can apply to different groups within a community. It can also apply to the political process itself, for instance, to the implementation of decisions when people feel that their trust has been violated by a delegate or an official. Such dialogues pertain to the ethical use of power.

The last kind of dialogue can be called 'belief-exploration'. Whilst people might disagree about a specific proposition, such a statement of meta-policy, nevertheless, they might well agree about a host of other propositions pertaining to this meta-policy. To facilitate greater mutual understanding, people need to comprehend each other's views more deeply, outside of the pressured process of coming to a community decision. All dialogue processes have epistemological requisites, which include openness to others, listening without judging, questioning and mutual inquiry.

In this chapter, we also respond to the challenge that consensus-building is impractical by outlining how local assemblies might function with the support of persons in various roles such as: facilitator; council member; delegate; and official. We describe how each of these roles might function in relation to the local assembly, and we argue that the appointment to these various roles needn't be politicised and dominated by personality issues.

We likewise confront the objection that, even with the dialogues and supporting roles in place, consensus may be impossible to achieve. We discuss what should happen when a community reaches an impasse. We also reply to the objection that there might be radical disagreements that cannot be settled by examining the contextual and relational nature of belief, and by thinking more deeply about the term 'cannot'.

Chapter 5: A Decentralised System

If 'governance' were to imply that there is an instrumentalised dichotomy between those who govern and those who are being governed, then participatory democracy would be impossible. This separation of the governing and the governed violates the principle of equality: it necessarily implies that some people should have the power to rule and that others are relatively powerless and even marginalised and alienated. Therefore, participatory democratic processes need to be designed in ways that overcome this kind of dichotomy.

Political parties instrumentalise politics. Their fundamental aim is to become a political monopoly. The people who assume roles in political parties quickly follow suit in their own personal aims, and they define themselves as being against something else, namely another party. Such antagonisms quickly escalate. Issues can

rapidly become emblems or symbols of something else, such as party allegiance. This polarised approach reinforces the erroneous idea that a society is primarily an arena for competition. The polarisation constitutes an instrumentalisation of persons, which can escalate to a climax akin to an implicit war. The polarisation also constitutes a tendency to instrumentalise claims to truth and knowledge. These points comprise an argument for the removal or reform of political parties. We reply to various objections to this line of argument. We also consider the role of the press, social media and lobbying companies in an instrumentalised political system dominated by parties, and their roles in generating an antagonistic and vindictive political culture.

Individualism is part of such an antagonistic culture, and it is harmfully erroneous. Primarily, individualism ignores the various ways in which the well-being of humans is irreducibly relational. Our relationships aren't like external causes of individual well-being; such a view would instrumentalise relations. Instead, relationships partly constitute our well-being. Furthermore, we live and work in institutions that aren't reducible to contracts for mutual benefit. Individualism mischaracterises both the life of persons and the nature of institutions. Individualism may look attractive when the only alternative is a form of collectivism that reifies institutions in ways that seem totalitarian. In reply, we argue that to avoid individualism does not require the reification of institutions and vice versa. Rejecting the reification of social institutions does not mean that a social ontology of individualism is true.

Individualism also underlies the idea that politics must and should be competitive. Such a Hobbesian picture is untrue for several reasons. Being individualistic, it fails to distinguish material and instrumental self-interest from non-instrumental well-being. Well-being isn't *constituted* by material self-interest, even when the latter causes the former. Individualism is not able to recognise the non-reductive nature of communities and the relational nature of well-being. Therefore, it is unable to appreciate how our being together is valuable-in-itself. This undermines the idea that society is primarily an arena for competition.

The point about individualism is also important for framing the argument in favour of participatory democracy. Some writers try to support such a democracy by appealing to autonomous self-government and liberty. We maintain that this kind of argumentation is usually individualistic in a damaging way. We also claim that, once the individualism has been removed from such attempted justifications of participatory democracy, one is left with the idea of the equal non-instrumental value of all persons, as outlined in the first chapter. The main issue is equality, rather than individual autonomy.

In the final part of the chapter, we argue for a decentralised political system in which the national assemblies would be responsible to the regional ones, who are

in turn responsible to the local. In this new proposal, local assemblies undertake consensus-building processes which result in meta-policy decisions, some of which will pertain to policies at regional and national levels. This decentralised organisation would comprise a participatory delegate system. We try to show why this would be a better arrangement than a representative system. In part, we do so by describing how a delegate system might function and by answering some objections. We also show how the current representative system inherently instrumentalises.

Chapter 6: The Design of National Institutions

A central theme of the book is that the principles argued for earlier comprise the basis for the design of new political institutions. In this spirit, we make some tentative and schematic suggestions about how national institutions might function in a decentralised participatory democracy. In particular, we want to show that, instead of seeking power to govern the people, such institutions can be designed to maintain and sustain the power of the people.

This requires reframing the idea of a government. We show how a national assembly and a national council might appoint executive officials who are independent of any political affiliation. We describe how such a system might function given a clear separation of policy-making and executive functions, but without this creating a government as a ruling body. We briefly describe budgeting and taxation within such a system.

The institutions we live in need to embody the non-instrumentally valuable relational components of well-being, which are both communitarian and cosmopolitan. The local assembly is a site for people to be part of a community, to enjoy being together, to deliberate and decide together. It is a place for people to be part of each other's lives. We argue that this idea can be extended to the region and beyond. Regional and national assemblies need to be constructed and run in ways that allow people in their local communities to feel and be part of the regional and national.

We also examine the implications of participatory democracy for the institution of the state. We define the state in terms of four functions or machines. We describe how these functions are instrumentalised under the current representative system and show how this instrumentalisation might be avoided in a participatory system.

These analyses show that participatory democracy requires the construction of new institutions distinct from the traditionally conceived centralised dominance of the state. As traditionally conceived, the state is a centralising institution that

exercises power through imposition. Thus, as currently conceived, as an institution of representative governance, the state necessarily instrumentalises people. This establishes a new problematic. How can we have *functional* governance institutions that respect the principles of participatory democracy? To answer this question, we need several ideas.

First, we need the concept of nested associations and democratic participation. In contemporary discussions of communitarianism, this is usually referred to as scaling-up. We show how the principles for local participatory governance can allow for nested democratic associations (cf. Hirst, 1994). This is significantly different from a representative governance system because it doesn't devolve decision-power in representatives. The practices of nested assemblies require principles for consensus-building beyond the local assembly, which we discussed in chapter 5.

Second, a new participatory system will need to entrust hermeneutical power in publicly appointed officials. Functionaries will need to translate the meta-policy decisions made by local assemblies into policy statements. We discuss the principles underlying the design of these non-partisan roles.

Third, the need for nested consensus-building and publicly appointed administrators contradicts the concept of political parties that exercise the power of the whip and power over those who implement the policy decisions of assemblies. In this regard, the system needs to be free of political associations that try to predetermine policy and political actions prior to assembly discussion and decision.

Fourth, currently, people tend to assume that all public institutions must come under the broad umbrella of the centralised state. People also tend to assume that those that don't fall under this umbrella will be self-promoting, private for-profit organisations. This dichotomy needs to be relinquished. Important exceptions such as public trusts and associations are possible within a decentralised participatory system.

Objections, Limitations and Conclusions

The conclusion offers us the opportunity to review the main arguments of the work and to show they contribute ideas that are significantly different from existing discussions. We identify six such contributions to the debate about participatory democracy. There may be others!

The conclusion also offers us the opportunity to reiterate the limitations of the book. For instance, we have only considered local and national public governance systems. We haven't considered important accompanying changes to the economic and educational system. We have not considered the required transformations in

the international political system. Moreover, the book doesn't consider theories of change: how do we go from here to there.

The conclusion allows us to revisit some of the most serious objections to the proposals argued for in this book. There are several groups of objections.

First, there are the concerns about the practicality of participatory democracy. Most people assume that participatory democracy based on consensus is impractical. We respond in several ways. The proposed system separates meta-policy, policy and execution. Assemblies deal with meta-policy; they don't have to be entangled with the intricate details of policies and their implementation. To the worry that the whole process will be time devouring, we reply that there needs be a supporting structure that permits local communities to make their voice heard within the limitations of the group's capacities. The roles of facilitator, delegate, council and official would amplify rather than diminish the power of the people. Furthermore, the proposed system would create the conditions in which trust can flourish. There would be no inherently antagonistic institutions such as political parties and a press with vested interests. There would be a political culture that embodies the collective virtues necessary for greater understanding.

A second set of objections contend that the proposal doesn't accord with human nature. There are various forms of this objection. One is that the majority of people are too ignorant or stupid, too lazy and apathetic, too maleficent and ill-willed to be an active part of a participatory democracy. We respond by pointing out that the claim that we should respect persons does not assume a specific view of human nature. Furthermore, the concept of human nature itself needs revision. It cannot be taken as a set of characteristics that people have independent of social conditions. Therefore, the objection that people are too egoistical for a participatory system ignores that the point that we tend to be egoistical in the current political-economic system which breeds and nurtures such tendencies. Furthermore, we shouldn't try to imagine a participatory political system without some corresponding revisions to the economic and educational institutions that currently support the division between the rulers and the ruled. There is another point. Through the various kinds of dialogue, the community itself supports people in being less self-centred and judgmental. It assists people in their process of acquiring the virtues and understanding necessary for the community to be a whole to be kinder and wiser.

Concerning the complexity of the issues that would confront these democratic forums, the proposed institutions can provide the aid so that consensus-building can transcend such intricacies. If councils, delegates and officials respect the decisions of the local assemblies, and these are framed as meta-policy decisions, then the assemblies often won't need to become embroiled in details.

Thirdly, we address the objections that revolve around the vulnerabilities of the proposed system. It might be argued that it is open to being instrumentalised and abused itself. How can it protect itself from and be resilient against instrumentalising alliances? Won't some people hold the system hostage in order to bargain the removal of their veto for some political favour? In general, the reply is that the proposed system needs to be shown to be better in these regards than the current representational democratic system even at its best. We argue that it is. This is partly because, in the proposed system, there are institutional spaces for people to exercise their voices and ears, within and beyond their local forums. There are no vested interested political parties to stoke up and manipulate antagonism because there are no political parties running a government and no party controlled government running the state.

This book has tried to envisage and argue for a non-instrumentalising and participatory political system. It has tried to show how such system could be practical, if it is properly designed, despite the many obstacles. However, the book hasn't tried to identify the steps needed for the implementation or realisation of such system. It hasn't tried to answer the question: how do we get from here to there? We finish the book by describing briefly the kinds of steps that would be necessary. A long-term historical view suggests that political structures and institutions will increasingly recognise the equal value of all people, and hence that the people are sovereign. Although there may well be temporary set-backs, the long-term trend is towards the recognition that equality requires that the distinction between ruled and rulers be dissolved. This claim doesn't endorse a teleological view of history; rather, it indicates out a long-term tendency, given the right conditions.

We have just outlined the many argumentative threads in this book that defend the thesis that a system of good governance must consist in a participatory democracy based on consensus. We have argued for this thesis on the basis of the claim that people shouldn't be instrumentalised and that any other supposedly democratic system, such as those based on voting and representation, will inevitably tend to instrumentalise and thereby treat some people as less valuable than others. The clarion call isn't 'we need to be free' but rather 'we are evaluatively equal'.

Chapter 1
A Conceptual Framework for Understanding Good Governance

What constitutes good governance? This question cannot be answered without understanding how the elusive word 'good' qualifies 'governance'. In this chapter, we shall examine some of the ways in which the word 'good' serves to describe the kind of governance that is desirable. In doing so, we shall introduce four key underlying principles of good governance. These principles are based on a central point regarding what really matters, or an axiological thesis.[12] Using this as a guide, the core argument of this chapter is that participatory democracy is the only political system consistent with the idea of 'what really matters' to human life, alongside other beings on the planet.

As mentioned in the Introduction, investigations of good governance tend to focus on either improving the practices of existing institutions or reforming these institutions. In contrast, the current proposal systematically re-envisages the political structure, that is, the system as a whole. What kinds of governance institutions do we need? What are the underlying evaluative principles that form the basis for the design of these institutions? The main aim of this chapter is to provide the conceptual and evaluative foundations for the design of the basic institutions required for good governance. Such a project requires a thorough grounding in the normative bases of politics.

With 'structure', we refer to the ways in which relevant institutions are systematically organised in relation to each other, as defined by a set of principles. Describing a political structure as good isn't the same as describing the human relationships that occur within that structure (Thomson, 2018). It isn't even the same as evaluating the performance of the institutions within that system. Structure isn't reducible to relationships between individual persons, nor institutional roles and effectiveness.

To apply the term 'good' to political-economic structures requires identifying the relevant normative principles (based on what really matters) and how these would shape the institutions, such as the state, the municipalities and their relations. These principles provide the evaluations needed to show how the term 'good' qualifies the structural features of a political system. They form the basis for the design of the afore-mentioned institutions.

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12 Axiology is a study of value. In this book, we use the axiological to refer to what matters.

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To elucidate these normative principles, this chapter is divided into three main parts. In the first part, we outline the importance of evaluative claims, and argue for the thesis that 'persons are non-instrumentally valuable'. We contend that this claim contains two principles, e.g. the principle of non-instrumentalisation, and the principle of equality. In the second part, we show how these two principles imply that any political system consistent with these two principles would need to be a participatory democracy, as opposed to a representative one. In the third part, we argue that, given the first two principles, the main purpose of public governance should be the well-being of all, and that such governance processes must be characterised by peacefulness. In sum, the chapter outlines four principles in two pairs: the principles of non-instrumentalisation and equality; and the principles of well-being and peacefulness. The argument for good governance through participatory democracy is a bridge between the first and second pair of principles.

Evaluative Claims and Principles of Non-Instrumentalisation and Equality

In the social sciences, writers tend not to distinguish between empirical and evaluative claims, or rather they avoid the evaluative by substituting it with empirical claims. Put simply, the distinction consists in: empirical statements describe what is, and evaluative ones tell us what ought to happen and what is better or worse. The social sciences are typically concerned exclusively with empirical facts about social groups, and often only with *measurable* ones. Hence, evaluative statements about what is good and why do not fit into such an empirical framework (See Thomson, 2002a, 2002b; Le Bar, 2013; Hollis, 2015).[13] Because of this, social scientists sometimes reduce claims about what *is* valuable to assertions about what some people consider to be valuable or what some people value. This is because the latter are empirical facts about some persons or some groups, which in principle can be measured.[14] Supposedly, in contrast, what is valuable seemingly isn't an empir-

13 Some authors, such as Mackie (1999), assume that in order for claims something is valuable or good to be true, there must exist values as Platonic entities. In other words, objective claims about what is valuable must be absolute rather than relational. This tendency to confuse absolute with objective and subjective with relational is criticised by McDowell (1998). In other words, there can be objectively true claims about what is valuable that aren't absolute. Objective claims don't need to be absolute.

14 "Theory tells us that well-being components or dimensions will assume different priorities in different countries, depending on their levels of achieved wellbeing, different cultural priorities

ical fact, at least in a straightforward way. Therefore, according to the social sciences, it must be understood in terms of what someone values. This connects what is valuable to the values that someone accepts or believes they 'have' (Seligman 2012, 29). For example, many economists tend to define what is valuable in terms of what a person prefers.[15]

However, against this suggestion, a person might *have* values that don't track what is valuable. The person may *value* the wrong kinds of things (Badhwar, 2014, 222). That is to say, what a person values doesn't necessarily mirror what is valuable. In this regard, humans are fallible: one can make mistakes and be ignorant concerning what is valuable. Therefore, *what is valuable* cannot be defined in terms of what the individuals value; and what is important for a person's life cannot be reduced to their preference,[16] nor their subjective views of what they think is valuable.[17] The fact that someone values something, or has a positive attitude towards it, or prefers it, doesn't *ipso facto* render it valuable. Nor is such a condition necessary. This conclusion is of fundamental importance for our project here. It sets us the task of defining the relevant kinds of value that constitute good governance.

Even if the affirmation of what is valuable lies outside the proper province of the social sciences, evaluative questions cannot be avoided in the investigation of good governance systems. For example, when we later argue that governance institutions *should* serve the well-being of all, this is clearly an evaluative claim. Furthermore, the concept of well-being itself is evaluative. 'Well-being' is roughly equivalent to 'being and living well'. Such evaluative claims must have criteria in virtue of which they are rendered true or false. We shall explain these criteria in terms of the evaluative principles underlying good governance.

The evaluative claim we put forward in this book is that all persons have non-instrumental values equally. This evaluative claim can be translated into two fundamental principles key to good governance: the first is the principle of non-instrumentalisation and the second is the principle of equality.

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and so on" (McGillivray and Noorbakhsh 2004: 15). That different cultures in fact value differently doesn't imply difference in what is valuable.

15 This includes whether a person feels satisfied with aspects of her life.

16 Even if we can so measure it.

17 Tiberius and Plakias (2010) seem to confuse subjective theories in this sense with hedonist and desire satisfaction-based theories. We need to separate a) the claim, what counts for well-being is dependent on the subject's positive attitudes or what she values from b) the statement, that pleasure and pain and/or that desire satisfaction might matter non-instrumentally for well-being. The first is akin to a meta-ethical subjectivist claim, which we briefly examined earlier. The second is a substantive normative claim about well-being which can be made within an objectivist framework.

The Principle of Non-Instrumentalisation

The first fundamental principle of participatory democracy is that people should be respected and treated as non-instrumentally valuable beings. What do we mean by 'non-instrumentally valuable'? And how does it differ from what is 'instrumentally valuable'? Something is instrumentally good or valuable insofar as it leads to something good or valuable or prevents something bad; by contrast, something is non-instrumentally good or valuable insofar as it is good/valuable for what it is (rather than only because of what it leads to). That is to say, things that are instrumentally valuable are valuable only because they lead to or are conducive to something that is non-instrumentally so. The former is entirely derivative on the latter. As a paradigm example, money is only instrumentally valuable; it only has value insofar as it enables us to purchase goods that in some way contribute to our living a good life and well-being. Persons, human lives, or our well-being, are non-instrumentally valuable. There are things that are valuable in simultaneously instrumental and non-instrumental ways, such as work and purposeful activities (Thomson, Gill, & Goodson, 2020).

We instrumentalise insofar as we treat something that is non-instrumental valuable as purely instrumentally valuable. In simple terms, we treat a person as an object. This denigrates them by denying their subjectivity and agency as self-conscious beings. There are several kinds of instrumentalisation of persons. The general term includes dehumanisation, exploitation, commodification, oppression, objectification, alienation, demonisation and animalisation, and even marginalisation. There are important differences between these each requires the idea of treating a person as less than fully a person. When we commodify a person or manipulate them, when we exploit a person or deceive them, these acts have to be understood primarily as instrumentalisations, even though there may be other features of (political) importance, such as the harmful effects of the act and the trauma as result of it. The instrumentalisation of persons is bad not only because it results in different kinds of harm, and not only because being instrumentalised is usually experienced as trauma, but also because instrumentalisation is bad *in itself.* It is like a betrayal of our being a person.

Such instrumentalisation confuses two ways things can be valuable. If something is valuable non-instrumentally then we can cherish, appreciate, and value it for its own sake. Whereas, insofar as something is valuable instrumentally, it is only a replaceable or dispensable means. Furthermore, its use is a mere cost, which is rational to reduce. Something of solely instrumental value is something that becomes valueless when it is no longer needed for the relevant ends in question. Such things are expendable, like for example, a ticket for a concert that happened last week or the keys to a house that has been demolished. Insofar as some-

thing is treated instrumentally, nothing about it matters except insofar as its use to accomplish the relevant ends. These are the reasons why the instrumentalisation of persons is an error. They explain why it is a mistake to treat the non-derivative as derivative.

These claims rely on the assumption that persons are non-derivatively valuable. Indeed, our main axiological thesis is that conscious beings, including humans, have non-derivative non-instrumental value.[18] This entails that human lives also have such value, and so too do the constituents and contents of our lives (our experiences, relationships, and actions, for instance), which amounts to our well-being (a notion to which we shall return later). In contrast, the goods and services that make up an economy and the social infrastructure necessary for a functioning society only have value derivatively, that is, the value of these derive from the value of the lives of conscious beings, which is non-derivative.[19]

The reason why the axiological thesis is true is that if anything has value then persons (or self-conscious beings) must have non-derivative value. All values require the value of such beings. This is because the assertion that something is valuable essentially entails that it constitutes a reason for choice and appreciation. And persons are beings capable of making choices and appreciating in ways that are guided by reasons. Therefore, the whole idea that things are valuable depends on their possible relation to persons who can make better and worse choices. If everything is valuable only through its relation to persons, then persons are valuable in a non-derivative way.

The axiological thesis that we are advancing concerns what has primary value and why. We are not trying to analyse morality or the meaning of moral claims. Furthermore, the thesis doesn't imply that if something is non-instrumentally val-

18 We assume that the category of conscious beings includes more than the human, and that the difference between conscious and non-conscious beings is one of degree. In other words, there is no sharp cut-off point between persons and non-persons. The principles argued for here would need to be adapted to include this point. For example, we should respect conscious beings as such. For the sake of simplicity, we shall restrict our discussion to persons.

19 All values require the value of such beings. This is because the assertion that something is valuable essentially requires that it constitutes a reason for making choices and appreciating. Persons are beings capable of making choices and appreciating.Therefore, the whole idea that things are valuable depends on their possible relation to persons who can make better and worse choices. If everything is valuable only through its relation to persons, then persons are valuable in a non-derivative way. This argument doesn't show that *only* persons (and other conscious beings) have non-derivative value. One might argue that there are other forms of non-derivative value. For example, someone might think that some aesthetic values are non-derivatively valuable, independent of their role as part of human well-being. But this is an exoteric line of reasoning that we will not pursue further.

uable then it is so absolutely. The distinction doesn't commit one to a Platonic, absolutist conception of what is valuable (Mackie 1999). If something is valuable non-instrumentally then it can also be so relationally (see Thomson, Gill, & Goodson, 2020). For example, what counts as a good life or well-being for a human being is relational; it depends inter alia on some features of human life that wouldn't apply to dogs or cats. Nevertheless, well-being is non-instrumentally valuable.

To get to the core of what constitutes good governance and what makes it good, we need to specify the relevant non-instrumental values. What is instrumentally valuable such as costs and benefits, are only important because of their relation to what is non-instrumentally valuable, such as the lives (and well-being) of conscious beings.

The principle of non-instrumentalisation is a necessary condition of a good governance system. Clearly, at a most fundamental level, a good governance system must not instrumentalise people, and will instead respect persons as beings with conscious subjective experience who are agents. This principle can help us evaluate and identify that when our current political institutions and practices are experienced as undemocratic, which is precisely because they violate the principle of non-instrumentalisaton. For instance, politicians who have gained power tend to use that power to increase their power and, because of this, the system is open to lobbying, misleading political adverts and other forms of propaganda and manipulation. The voice of the people is treated as equivalent to votes, and votes become like a commodity that can be traded and used, a means for politicians to gain or retain power. In this way, people are instrumentalised. The governance system leaves many people without voice and without understanding of social issues. In disempowering them, it treats persons as less than agents. Therefore, the system fails as a democratic forum, or so we shall argue.

The principle of non-instrumentalisation is usually thought to be vulnerable because it is wedded to Kant's account of morality, but we explain in the Appendix that there are several ways in which our approach isn't Kantian.

The Minimal Notion of Equality

We have argued that persons are non-derivatively valuable. This is why it is an error to instrumentalise or to treat them as objects, or as less than fully self-conscious subjects who are agents. This argument forms the basis for a minimal notion of equality, namely that all people are *equally* non-instrumentally valuable. This is the second evaluative principle, and it consists in a combination of the axiology argued for earlier with the additional condition of impartiality.

It is a feature of our lived experience that we can feel and perceive others as more or less real. When we are self-absorbed, we struggle to come to terms with the reality of others, especially those who are distant. For example, for many people in Europe, the deaths of people in the war in South Sudan seem remote and faint. Even friends and people close to us may feel less real when we are in an egocentric mood or state. Among other things, this means that we do not always have the capacity to see things from the point of view of others, and even to appreciate that others have a point of view at all. The claim that all people are *equally real* serves as a corrective to this kind of partiality, as a reminder that our experience is partial and often egoistic in these ways. In affirming this idea, we are not claiming that one shouldn't care more about local lives and deaths. Rather we are asserting that, impersonally, they are equally real and valuable as people who are distant. When we add this impersonal perspective to the axiology that persons are non-derivatively valuable, we obtain the principle of equality. In effect, this principle means that there is a good reason to not instrumentalise anyone, equally, without exception. There is no good reason for any group or any person to be instrumentalised more or less than any other.

However, we should be careful of the numerical connotation of the term 'equally'. While we want to leave open the possibility that the idea of the degree to which a person instrumentalises or is instrumentalised makes sense, and that instrumentalisation can be measured, the principle of equality isn't itself numerical. In this context, 'equally' means that there is no good reason to discriminate in this regard.

'Equality' here doesn't mean that all people have equal *rights* as citizens. The idea of equal rights might follow from this principle together with other premises, but they are not the same. The idea that all persons are equally non-derivatively valuable doesn't depend on the notion of a moral right. Probably, the best way to understand the notion of a moral right is through the claim that, morally, people ought to have certain *legal* rights. People have moral rights when the legal system fails to assign to them certain kinds of protection that it morally ought to, or when it legally permits certain immoral acts that it ought to forbid. In contrast, the idea that all people are equally non-instrumentally valuable is much simpler: it doesn't depend on there being a legal system to assign rights, and should assign them certain people (and not others).

In a similar vein, the principle doesn't depend on the idea of what people deserve. The idea 'what a person deserves' is a retributivist concept employed to apportion goods, as benefits and harms, that persons morally ought to receive (or not) based on some set of conditions or criteria. For example, it might be claimed that people who work harder deserve more pay than those don't, all other things being equal. One might think that people who have been wronged deserve a rec-

ompense, and those who have committed a wrong deserve a punishment. 'Deserve' is fundamentally a question of merit. Arguably, it arises only in relation to social practices that involve the assignment of benefit (or harm) based on merit such as games, awards and grades. If so, then it doesn't arise outside of such contexts. For example, it wouldn't make sense to assert that Josef didn't deserve to be born in New York. This point means that it becomes a matter of contention which social practices involve the assignment of benefit based on merit and which don't. Is job promotion such a practice? Is hospital bed allocation such a practice? If the answer is 'yes' then another difficult question arises: what are the relevant criteria for merit? In this discussion, thankfully, we can avoid these tough issues because the principle of equal non-derivative value of persons is situated at a more basic level than discussions of deserves and merits, as it is with the allied notion of rights.

Likewise, the principle of equality doesn't require the notion of citizen, tied to the institution of a state. Equality of value will apply to people who are not citizens, and it will apply to people who, in various historical conditions, don't live in nation-states at all. This point doesn't disavow the idea of the state. It simply indicates that the relevant notion of equality is more basic.

Furthermore, the principle of equality doesn't mean that all people should be treated equally. However, it does mean that no person should be instrumentalised, and that no person should be instrumentalised more (or less) than any other. When we decide how to treat people, all sorts of complex instrumental considerations kick in, including higher-level regulative ones that concern the past such as those related to rights and fairness, and these might require the differentiated treatment of people. Nevertheless, the principle of equality remains true: no-one should be instrumentalised.

A good governance system would not violate this minimal principle of equality. As we shall see, the only system that satisfies this condition is a participatory democracy. The current representative system leaves many people without voice and, in this, it fails as a democratic forum with respect to the criterion of equality. This argument tack differs substantially from causal justifications of participatory democracy and those based on liberty and self-governance.

Participatory Democracy as Good Governance

Our main thesis is that non-instrumentalisation and the equal non-derivative value of all persons require a participatory democratic governance system. A democratic system is participatory insofar as all members of the society or relevant persons participate in agenda setting, identifying priorities, and formulating public poli-

cies.[20] This requirement suggests that anything less than a participatory democracy will necessarily breach the two principles. This is because non-participatory democracy, such as representative democracy, instrumentalises people either by ignoring them or by excluding them from policy formulation, and thereby not treating them fully as conscious beings or agents. Anything less (than participatory democracy) is inconsistent with respect the non-derivative value of the persons. In practice, in representative democracies, people are deliberately manipulated by being subject to propaganda and lobbying. This constitutes another form of instrumentalisation – people and their votes are used by election campaigns purely instrumentally to gain political power (Margalit 1988).

The most common justifications for democracy hinge on its supposed causal benefits. For example, it is argued that democracy produces better policies and laws because large groups tend to converge on truth and because a diversity of views allows for better social problem-solving (see Mill 1861, ch. 3; Christiano, 2011; Gaus 2011, ch. 22). In addition, it is contended that democracy in a society promotes economic growth, makes for a safer society and cultivates morally superior people (Kaufman,1960/1969, 184). Sometimes, these arguments presuppose that the term 'democracy' refers to an electoral or representative system; sometimes, versions of the arguments are taken to support participatory democracy. However, as we shall show, the two principles we outlined form a stronger and more direct argument *for* participatory democracy, that does not depend on such causal benefits. They form a conceptual justification. Furthermore, the argument we provide will be different from other non-causal arguments for democratic political systems in ways that are important.

Our main argument is that if a system does not allow a member of a society to participate directly in the formulation of public policy then she is being treated instrumentally. It is as if she had no voice. This means it is *as if* she were not a self-conscious subject with agency. Insofar as she is being treated as such, she is being instrumentalized. Therefore, a good governance system will be participatory democratic. It is the only political system that treats people fully as subjects with agency.

20 The phrase 'all members of the society' is thorny; so is 'relevant persons'; even the word 'participate' is problematic. These terms need explanation and qualification, but let us save these refinements for later.

Responding to Objections

There are some objections to both our *argument* for this claim and the *position* of the claim itself. The main objection to the *argument* is that the underlying assumed dichotomy, i.e. 'an instrumentalised political system vs participatory democratic system' is a false one. There is an *obvious* third alternative namely various forms of representative or electoral democracy, furthermore this third alternative is theoretically more robust than one might think despite the weaknesses of the system in practice. The flaws in practice do not *ipso facto* constitute the failure of the system itself. In other words, support for the third alternative argues that the idea of an electoral democracy can be solid, even if the ways it is actually implemented in various countries are not.

One objection to our *position* is that participatory democracy is impractical: it is impossible to imagine, let alone construct, a system that allows millions of people to participate in the formulation of public policies. For one, the vast majority of the people don't have adequate knowledge and understanding for policy-making. For another, to put it mildly, people squabble. There are always disagreements between them that cannot be settled even in principle. When people are confronted with political views that are very different from their own, this will be off-putting and will actually discourage participation (Mutz, 2006). As Schumpeter (1950) puts it in a rather Platonic tone: "Party and machine politicians are simply the response to the fact that the electoral mass is incapable of action other than a stampede." Moreover, participatory institutions would make unrealistic demands on people's time. According to this set of objections, the whole idea is a non-starter. The objection that the position is impractical needs to be answered throughout this book the main task of which is to envisage a participatory democracy that overcomes such practical challenges.

For now, let's examine the objection to the *argument* for our claim. It is derived from John Locke' (1689) who argues that, because each member of a society formed by a social contract is equal, the decision rule should be majoritarian: the majority should decide the regulations that govern the society. Furthermore, Locke thinks that for a person to be legitimately subject to the regulations, they must have consented to these, albeit indirectly through representative democratic institutions. Following Locke, one might argue that direct participation *isn't* necessary because even when applying the principle of the equal non-instrumental value of all persons, governance only requires representative or electoral democracy. In other words, if the rulers are elected by the majority, a representative system doesn't instrumentalise people and therefore, participatory democracy is not necessary.

Our reply to this Lockean objection is that so long as there is a distinction between the *ruler* (or the governor) and the *ruled* (or the governed), then the system does not treat all people as equally valuable. This applies even if the ruler is an elected official, or an elected government within an elected parliament. Those who rule are the ones who decide policy. If there is a ruler, it renders the rest of us the ruled: we don't make policy. In this way, the system treats the ruled as less valuable than the ruler, hence the equality of persons is violated. This inequality instrumentalises the ruled. Representative democracy instrumentalises precisely because it treats some people as ruled, as non-participants in policy-formulation and decision-making. Insofar as it does that, such a system instrumentalises people by treating us as less than participants.

The counter-objection to this reply is that we do make policy *indirectly* via elected representatives in the assembly. Therefore, the system does not treat people as less valuable or as ruled. A representative system is one in which the people elect to a policy-making assembly so-called 'representatives' from among various candidates, who declare their views and political agenda beforehand. According to this definition, we aren't ruled because we participate in policy-making indirectly via our elected representatives.

However, this counter-objection fails because of the way the term '*representative* democracy' is a misleading misnomer. In such a system, those elected are not really *representatives* at all. To represent is to speak for or act on behalf of a person or group. It is a form of delegation or agency agreement in which it is as if the actions of an agent are those of the principal with respect to a defined and limited set of purposes. In this sense of the term, one cannot claim truly that the duly elected member of a regional or national assembly is the agent of the members of the relevant constituency. The so-called 'representative' doesn't even know our views, and there are no inclusive spaces for the required systematic listening and dialogue. The public spaces for our so-called 'representative' to understand our views is extremely restricted.

Furthermore, even if there were listening and dialogue, these would only be informal or pro-forma because an elected representative supposedly already has a mandate from the electorate to try to implement their party manifesto. Furthermore, again, even if one voted for the party in question, this cannot count as a representation or agency agreement because we don't have minimum discretion: we can't withdraw political participation for four years. Additionally, at the time of voting, we can only either select person A and their whole package of views, or else reject person A and the packet. It is all or nothing. Either one buys in or one doesn't. This is the only choice. In this way, once one has voted, one becomes largely passive and powerless. In these ways, a voter is not being treated as a person, as a subject who is an agent.

To make this last argument clearer, we can separate at least four strands of such an electoral system that are anti-democratic. Later, we will add two further ones concerning the assembly as such.

1) Representative democracy only allows people (citizens) to vote on a periodic basis for one representative, among a slate of candidates, but without the capacity to recall or withdraw that vote. Once cast, the vote is not returnable. Under normal conditions, the elected representative is not replaceable by the voters until the next election, however much the representative is disliked by those who originally voted for them.
2) The candidate people vote for represents a slew of policies, which comes in a pre-packaged packet. One cannot express approval of some of these policies and disapproval of the others. In other words, as a voter, one cannot vote for specific policies. For example, if one thinks that the representative stands for a sound policy on A which is very important, but for an abhorrent policy on B which is less important, then one may have to vote for this candidate.
3) We cannot vote for the policies independently of the candidate. One cannot say "I think this candidate will do a terrible job, but I think that many of the policies they stand for are good." This usually means that the personality of candidates becomes inseparably and disastrously mixed in with policy issues.
4) There are no systematic two-way conversations or discussions with the elected persons about the policies that might change how they vote in the assembly. Therefore, one might think that policy A would be considerably improved with a small caveat or qualification. However, such an idea is politically impotent in the current system. The ordinary person is mute. Or between elections, the system is deaf to one's voice.

In practice, these points are often alleviated by reforms to the system. For instance, it can be made easier for local constituencies to hold recall elections; we can have ballots on some issues; one can have more frequent informal town-hall meetings and citizen assemblies; representatives can have surgery meetings. No doubt such reforms or alleviations are to be welcomed. However, they don't constitute a transformation of a system that tends to instrumentalise persons by converting them politically into mere voters. An ordinary person, in a representative system, politically, has become someone who elects someone else who makes policy decisions. Therefore, an ordinary person is being ruled, even though the ordinary person has helped choose the ruler.

To recap, the political participation of an ordinary person is restricted to voting for a candidate for the position of policy-maker under the following four undemocratic conditions. First, once given, the ordinary person cannot withdraw

their vote for a candidate and back another instead. The vote is non-refundable and non-revisable until the next election. Second, the so-called representative stands for a whole package of policy positions, and we cannot use our vote to discriminate between them. Third, there is no way for the ordinary person to distinguish between the candidate and the packet of policies. Fourth, the policies are largely pre-set, and they are not systematically amenable to change through institutionalised conversations with ordinary people. These four conditions are jointly sufficient to constitute an instrumentalisation of the ordinary person. In light of these four points, the system creates a division between the rulers and the ruled, even though the rulers are elected, and albeit that those who rule do so with the usually polite and legal sword of policy and law-making.

The four points indicate how the representative system diminishes the power of the ordinary person in two ways: after and before the vote.

First, *after* the electing vote has been cast, the system creates a power imbalance between the ordinary person and those who are supposed to represent them, such that the *representor* has the power and the *representee* has almost none. After casting the vote, there is almost nothing the ordinary person can do. The system restricts the role of the ordinary person to being a voter in elections for candidates for an assembly. The ordinary person is politically diminished to being a voter, and this role is restricted to voting in elections for people who are effectively rulers. Politically, our role is limited to being an elector of our ruler.

Second, *before* election: given this huge imbalance *after* the election-vote has been cast, all power-decisions are concentrated on the election-vote itself. Consequently, there is an ineluctable tendency for this vote to become instrumentalised, and for the lead-up *before* the election to instrumentalise the person who votes. All the sovereign power of the people is focused onto a single token, which becomes like a commodity that can be gained by manipulation and deception. This isn't an accidental weakness in the way representative electoral democracy happens to be implemented. Rather, it is an inherent feature of the system itself which funnels all power-choice into a single electoral decision, i. e. voting for a representative. Because the sovereignty of the people is concentrated onto the election of rulers in accordance with the four conditions, it allows the vote to be bought through publicity campaign, fearmongering, falsehoods, electoral repression and creative boundary-drawing. In a representative democracy, the rulers usually cannot rule by overt force, as they would be able to in a dictatorship or a totalitarian regime. Instead, they must rule by stealth, by statecraft, through propaganda and law. Therefore, the predominant form of instrumentalisation in an electoral democracy isn't overt violent oppression, but rather the attempt to control the vote.

The conclusion is that democracy shouldn't be wedded to the action of ballot-box voting to elect representatives (Van Reybrouck, 2015). We shouldn't confuse de-

mocracy itself with the institution of an elected parliament (Rousseau 1997). Therefore, we can conclude that the Lockean option isn't after all an objection to our original argument because it isn't an alternative to the dichotomy on which that argument depends, namely, 'participatory democratic system or instrumentalised political system.' On examination, we can see that the Lockean option clearly falls into the second category.

Another objection to our argument is that a necessary ingredient of representative democracy is the rule of law. According to this concept, our suggestion that elected representatives are rulers is mistaken because, in such a democracy, there is the rule of law rather than the rule of persons. The rule of law means that persons don't govern; the law does.

This objection also fails. It is true that elected representatives and members of the government have to obey the law, and that the law defines key administrative and governance processes. This means that, in theory, in an elected democracy, all people are subject to the law, and in this sense, they are equal before the law. It also means that the assembly of representatives and the government have to follow the procedures explicitly laid down in their actions. These are very important ideas and practices because they define a space of *possible* public reasoning. In this sense, the rule of law is a social good compared to dictatorship and the *ad hoc* use of power by officials.

However, these ideas don't obviate the earlier point that the assembly of representatives is the ruler. Granted, the point now needs additional qualification: they are elected rulers *who are subject to the law.* Nevertheless, our reply is sustained by the following reflection: laws *per se* don't govern; people govern following the law and by making new laws. People govern by coming to decisions about what should be done, and we can use the term 'policy-making' as a provisional shorthand for this process. People make policy. What is called 'the rule of law' is really 'rule in accordance with law'. We are still ruled by rulers, even when the ruling is done with courteous 'sword' of law-following.

A further objection to our main argument is that not all opinions are equal. For instance, some views are well thought-out and well-informed, while some are based on misunderstandings and mistakes. This important point seems to indicate that those who make policies should be those who have the best understanding of the relevant issues and facts, and this thought seems to pull us away from participatory democracy towards more elitist systems in which specialists make the relevant decisions. This seems to be a point in favour of a representative system because voters can elect representatives who have the required expertise, or at least, have the epistemic skills and virtues required to consult well with those who do have the expertise.

The reply to this objection needs to be divided into two: the practical and the theoretical. For the practical, the reply is that the objection sets us a task, that of designing a participatory democratic system that can use expertise knowledge well, one that separates the democratic process of a community coming to policy decisions from the various expert inputs into that process. This task will be elaborated in Chapter Three. Note how this practical objection is lop-sided: in current representative democracy, as a matter of fact, we often don't vote for candidates who have the relevant skills, and such capacities are seldom regarded as a criterion in elections.

The theoretical reply is that the fact that a person holds beliefs that are probably false is not a reason for thinking that the person is unequal or less non-instrumentally valuable than other persons. That a person is likely mistaken in their beliefs isn't a reason for instrumentalising them. One might be tempted to claim that their voice matters less if, for instance, it is consistently ill-informed. However, such a claim is ambiguous. It fails to distinguish the voice as the voice of a person, and the voice as a claim to truth. We distinguish the messenger from the message. There is good reason not to dismiss and disregard those persons whose beliefs we think are mistaken (even if those beliefs *are* mistaken!). This reason is that as persons, they are non-instrumentally valuable as much as someone who speaks the truth. We are all equals, and we must engage with each other as such. Nevertheless, this doesn't mean that all beliefs are equally justifiable! It does suggest that we will need to take seriously views that we would normally consider false and try to see things from points of view that are quite different from ours. We ought to listen to and engage with what we are prone to dismiss. The process of entering the phenomenological world of a person whose life experience is very different from our own, and seeing their views as reasonable can be a profoundly transformative experience. This experience is at the core of what participatory democracy is about. In a community, to understand each other better requires dialogue, listening, as well as space, time and patience.

One might think that engaging with people who have apparently false views is an energy-consuming business and a waste of time. In reply to this, we would remind ourselves that the meaning of our lives largely revolves around other people and our relations with them (Thomson, Gill & Goodson, 2020). One might hope that we have the space in our hearts to *be* with people who are very different from us and to learn from them. If one doesn't have time for the people who comprise one's own community, then this might suggest that the axis of our lives has been perturbed, perhaps by the forces of an instrumentalised economy. More on this in later chapters.

A similar point supposedly against participatory democracy is that the majority of the people are too uninformed and/or not intelligent enough to participate in

group discussions about what is good for the community. They are just not up to it. There is plenty of strong empirical evidence of people's current ignorance about political matters (e.g. Brennan, 2016; Somin, 2013). However, this evidence doesn't establish the counterfactual proposition that people would continue to be ignorant if they had the opportunity to participate as equals in policy-formation that affects our common lives. On the contrary, one would think that this ignorance would be greatly diminished in a participatory democracy. In particular, a participatory democracy would presuppose a much more equal society, with better schooling for the majority and with more economic justice. Current evidence doesn't show that people would remain ignorant under such conditions. Moreover, the empirical evidence about the current situation doesn't defeat the relevant normative claims, namely that a political economic system that permits a huge percentage of the population to be educated only to the level required for mindless work should be changed because it is unjust. Instead, we need a more human-centred educational system and a well-being sensitive economic system. If the political-economic structure breeds ignorant people, then the structure should be changed.

Earlier, we supported the thesis that elected members of the assembly are rulers by describing the relevant power dynamics before and after the voting, as defined by the four conditions. We were careful to avoid including points about governments and the functioning of the assembly itself. Such points depend on the design of other institutions apart from the voting process. We can now briefly mention two additional points, regarding the assembly:

5) The assembly-institution to which the so-called representatives are elected (such as a parliament or congress) is controlled by political parties, which are themselves controlled by vested interests.
6) In the assembly, the majority rule system means that a small majority can push through policies without engaging with a large minority.

The fifth and sixth points open the door to a complex set of new considerations for later chapters. We have confined our analysis so far to the relation between the ordinary person and the various elected assemblies. For instance, we haven't yet considered the role and formation of governments. Nor have we considered the functioning/ mode operandi of the assembly as such. It is better to deal with one thing at a time! In general terms, our point was that in a representative democracy, the assembly (parliament or congress) that makes policy decisions for the society as a whole are rulers compared to the ordinary persons. However, the system also establishes the assembly as a place in which these rulers can themselves be instrumentalised. Here lies an inherent tendency: as elections become increasingly instrumentalised, the assembly members need more financial support to retain their position in the next election cycle. To gain this financial support,

they easily become instrumentalised by the wealthy and further alienated from those in the region they are supposed to represent. This constitutes an escalation of instrumentalisation. This is a topic of Chapter 5.

Likewise, in many assemblies, the party that isn't in power is consistently outvoted even though it *supposedly* represents a significant minority of the population. In other words, in terms of voting percentages, the difference between the party in power and the so-called opposition can be very small. Yet, even with a slender vote difference, the party in power can push through legislation that would be considered abhorrent by the opposition. It is as if the opposition has no voice. Therefore, the people who voted for the opposition are alienated at least twice: by the voting system itself and by being the minority within the assembly of representatives. Quite apart from the diminishing of people-power to electing rulers, it is astonishing that as much as 49.9% of the voters have no say in an assembly that is dominated by two parties. We should take more seriously Lincoln's famous words: "government of the people, by the people, for the people". We should not be willing to substitute it with "government of the people, by elected rulers, for elites'. Democracy conceived as who 'the people elect' hides that the people don't decide policy. There is a huge difference of principle between the two. In short, a so-called 'representative democracy' instrumentalises.

Other Considerations

Historically, in some countries, the electoral representative system has been explicitly regarded as a way to limit democracy. For example, those who framed the USA constitution decried democracy with arguments reminiscent of Plato. Of course, insofar as these objections to democracy are pertinent to our argument, they admit that an elected representative system of government isn't fully democratic at all. Their underlying message is something like this: we don't want a full democracy because we need rulers who can govern the country (even if the people should have a say in terms of who will rule them). This kind of analysis admits that the elected representative system is not fully democratic.

Traditionally, non-causal arguments for democracy are based on the notion of liberty and self-determination or self-governance. The argument for democracy based on liberty is roughly that a ruler is someone who can systematically impose and force people to act against their will, and that, therefore, in contrast, the key feature of a full democratic system must be that the people have liberty or freedom. We will argue that this emphasis is erroneous.

One interesting problem with this kind of argument is that it is usually based on the idea of a non-legal or moral right: people have a moral right to liberty or

self-governance, and a democratic system is the only one that doesn't infringe such a right. Such a position implies that there are pre-social moral rights, it requires the idea of a natural right.[21] However, against such a position, the notion of a right is either purely legal or else it is derivative on other moral principles, such as the Categorical Imperative,[22] or the Principle of Utility.[23] This means that we cannot appeal to the notion of a natural right to liberty as a basic.

Furthermore, the notion of freedom is incomplete: it must be relative, either to some obstacle (which we must be free from), or to some actions (which we should be free to pursue). Therefore, the petition to freedom or liberty *per se* is not an appeal to some non-derivative value; the value of freedom is derivative on what the liberty in question allows. Of course, the appeal to freedom could be a disguised way of citing the idea that we should respect the agency of persons. In which case, it is the principle that we have been defending all along, namely that of the non-instrumentalisation of persons.

The main problem with the attempted justification in terms of freedom is that the relevant notion of liberty is individualistic. Usually, it pits the individual against government by relying on a notion of individualised autonomy: each one of us is an independent being who has sovereignty over their life. In this account, agency amounts to the capacity for self-rule which is equivalent to autonomy. However, this notion relies on individualism: more or less, the claim that one is fundamentally an individual whose existence can be characterised independently of our social relations and social institutions. As we shall see later, such a view doesn't allow us to describe social institutions in any other ways except in terms of contracts between self-interested atoms (as outlined in Hobbes' *Leviathan,* 1651). Given such a conception of liberty, it is impossible to conceive of a social institution that isn't at heart a contract for self-benefit. As such, the idea of the actions of an institution or a cooperation as a group coming together to do things collaboratively becomes impossible. It is replaced by cooperation as coordinated self-interested individual actions. In this manner, the individualistic conception of liberty cuts us off from the main idea of democracy which ought to be based on the idea of the people as a community of equals, where the term 'community' is non-individualistic. Democracy requires collective or common action; therefore, the argument for it cannot cite a conception of autonomy that makes such collective action impossible. As Rousseau realises, this point is vitally important for understanding the nature of democracy. Representative democracy individualises us. Each has their single

21 E.g. Jean-Jacques Rousseau's argument for the social contract.
22 introduced in Kant's 1785 *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*
23 See John Stuart Mill's work. Utilitarianism

vote. In contrast, participatory democracy is about a community making decisions and formulating policies, as a whole together.

The above critique can be extended to the argument that the normative basis of democracy is self-governance or self-determination. These terms either refer to the individual as sovereign over herself, or to self-conscious agency. In the first case, the idea that a person is sovereign over herself imputes to the agent a self-contained and individualistic atomic autonomy, which does not allow for social institutions as communities (as mentioned and as we shall make clearer in Chapter 6). It commits one to a pernicious form of individualism. Whereas in the second case, the justification for participatory democracy is simply an appeal to the fact that, as persons, we are self-conscious agents. In other words, the argument is that only democracy is consistent with our being self-conscious agents. Of course, this claim has been at the core of the argument of this chapter, and it does not commit one to a ruinous form of individualism.

Result-based justifications of participatory democracy, such as those of Carole Pateman and Arnold Kaufman, are subject to the objection that the relevant counterfactual causal claims might turn out to be false. For example, Pateman (1970, 43) argues for participatory democracy on the grounds that it alone enables "the development of the social and political capacities of each individual." However, suppose it turned out that in fact people would have more developed capacities in a system akin to a benevolent autocratic republic like that of Plato. Suppose, for instance, that the wise and benevolent rulers deliberately shape the educational system for this purpose. In such a case, given the arguments, someone who adopted only a causal justification would have to switch their position from participatory democracy to an autocracy or epistocracy. So, perhaps the argument shouldn't be *only* that democracy *causes* or enhances such capacities, but it should *also* be that participatory democracy is the only system that is compatible with the community exercise of such capabilities. It is the only system that *embodies* such values. In which case, the justification isn't simply regarding what it causes, but it is also concerns what such democracy is, by its nature. The argument isn't solely about benefits but also about what social way of being accords with the nature of ourselves as self-conscious agents. So, with a couple of steps, we are back to the original idea that only participatory democracy is consistent with the nature of our being, i.e. as persons with a self-conscious subjectivity that modulates our agency in a community. The causal argument needs to be supplemented with a non-causal argument.

Earlier we employed the thorny phrase '*all members of the society or relevant persons*'. Perhaps, not all members of society would be eligible for participation. For example, one might argue that there should be a lower age-limit and that people with serious mental illnesses shouldn't be eligible. One might argue that only

citizens should participate. In any case, there will be residential requirements. We mention these difficult questions only to set them aside. The phrase 'relevant persons' indicates that *people* are participants *as persons.* They are participants not because they have a legal right nor even because they are citizens or because they have entered into a hypothetical social contract with the state or with each other.

The term 'participatory democracy' is ambiguous because often the activities referred to with the word 'participation' are those of protest and demonstration. These acts occur within systems that aren't democratic, such as an electoral-representative system. They are acts of making one's voice heard within a system that is deaf between elections, and which usually only listens to what it wants to hear during elections. In the context of protest, 'heard' means that the elected representatives or the rulers pay attention. Ironically, protesters need a ruler to listen to their voices. This signifies that such protests occur only within a system that already has a ruler/ruled divide, even if the rulers are elected. In sharp contrast, as we shall use it, the term 'participation' indicates how a person is part or member of a community and a wider society by being an integral part of the processes that formulate the policies of the community and wider society.

What we call 'participatory democracy' is often named 'deliberative democracy' in which decisions are arrived at through collective public reasoning (O'Flynn, 2006). However, in this book, we will avoid the term 'deliberative' because as we shall illustrate in the remainder of the book, deliberation is only a small part of the complex processes that participatory democracy requires. 'Deliberation' tends to refer to intellectual involvement during the consensus-building, but as we shall argue in this book, democracy requires the engagement of the whole person.

In summary, the first two principles, namely the principle of non-instrumentalisation and the principle of (minimal) equality of all persons, are necessary conditions for a definition of good governance. A good governance system is one in which people are not instrumentalised and which treats all persons equally as beings of non-instrumental value. The only system that does this is a participatory system of democracy.

The Nature of Governance Process and Purpose

The first two principles form a necessary basis for understanding peaceful political processes. Likewise, they also point to the ultimate aim of good governance as enhancing the well-being and flourishing of all persons.

The Principle of Positive Peace and Non-Antagonism

The third evaluative principle is positive peace and non-antagonism. Violence is *par excellence* an instrumentalisation, in which other persons are treated merely as either an obstacle, or as a means, to the achieving of *our* ends. Therefore, a violent political culture entails an antagonistic division between *us* and *them.* Once a set of institutions systematically permits instrumentalisation based on such a division, it will become a site of escalation of such instrumentalisation. Arguably, this is part of the phenomenon that we currently witness in divisive political parties and increased political polarisation. In short, an antagonistic divide between *us* and *them* is bound to instrumentalise people.

This conclusion suggests that participatory democratic processes facilitated by institutions designated for good governance would not be hostile and antagonistic. They would be designed to be peaceful in a positive way. A relationship is negatively peaceful insofar as the conflicts it contains do not lead to overt violence. For instance, a stalemate is negatively peaceful. A relationship is positively peaceful insofar as the conflicts it contains do not constitute an 'us-versus-them' division but an inclusive 'we'. Such a community can transform tensions and conflicts amongst its diverse members for the good of the community.

When we claim that participatory democracy will be positively peaceful, we don't mean that there will never be conflict and antagonism. What we do mean is that such conflict and antagonism are not inherent in the design or structure of the processes and institutions in question. In sharp contrast, combativeness is deeply built into representative democracy. Candidates battle to win votes, and one party is the winner, while the others lose. Harmless sounding sports metaphors related to competition, etc. are really a thinly disguised allusions to war. The logic of war pervades political parties built on allegiances and alliances, and hence on opposition. These are enemy-making processes. As one group become another group's enemy, each member of one group becomes aware of everyone in the other group as an enemy. Such processes tend to be self-reinforcing, unless the very design of the relevant institutions avoids the seeds of such antagonistic opposition. We will show how this is possible in Chapter 5, which will form the basis for a discussion on the nature of trust and processes of trust-building. All good political processes rely on trust, which cannot be understood without the ideas of non-instrumentalising and positively peaceful processes. Because enmity is constructed, albeit unwittingly, by such processes, it can also be deconstructed. The cultural and psychological violence that portrays the other as an enemy is characterised by a set of subjectivities as the result of political practices in which some groups are portrayed as less important or less worthy than other groups.

Among others, Schumpeter (1950) has argued that competition should be a feature of democratic processes because they allow for healthy contests between different visions of society. In fact, Schumpeter compares the democratic process to market competition. When parties offer policies to voters, this is akin to suppliers offering products to consumers. The analogy is instructively misleading in several ways. First, policy-making is a truth-tracking process: our public policies should generally reflect what is true. Sometimes, the relevant truths concern the common good or what might count as a fair compromise. Whereas when sellers and buyers meet in the market, the presumed driving force is only economic self-interest. There is no presumption of a truth that they are trying to find through competition. The concept of the marketplace of ideas relies on the notion of exchange, and it doesn't contain the idea of a search for truths. In this way, it portrays ideas as opinions rather than as beliefs. S*upposedly*, to have an opinion is not to think that one's opinion is true. In contrast, to believe a proposition is to think that it is true. One cannot sever the connection between 'one believes' and 'what is true', and thereby evade the possibility of being mistaken.

A second problem concerning Schumpeter's analogy is that insofar as competition is antagonistic, it is a part of instrumentalisation. Indeed, we see this propensity in economic markets: there is an inherent tendency for companies to gain some kind of monopolistic advantage over their competitors, and to have recourse to methods that defy the model of perfect competition over prices. Likewise, in politics, candidates and parties resort to instrumentalising war-like means to win. These are escalating tendencies. This means that when companies and political parties compete, the idea of respecting persons is not part of their defining relations.

A third problem with Schumpeter's comparison of democratic processes with market competition is that no political competition is healthy as such, and the battle for electoral victory usually deepens political polarisation and social divisiveness. By emphasising the differences in political views and affiliations, the antagonistic separation of us-vs-them will further exacerbate animosity between people and groups and will allow political parties to manipulate such hostility.

This escalating instrumentalisation of persons has significant epistemological implications, which will be a topic of a later chapter. In this chapter, we will focus the discussion on the instrumentalisation of communication largely through which the political battle tends to be won and lost. More specifically, political parties fight their war with propaganda, including other ploys such as gerrymandering and voter suppression. While the exact definition of the term 'propaganda' may be hazy, nevertheless, it is clear that it necessarily involves the instrumentalisation of truth and people, including by-passing, manipulating or subverting the capacity

of people to respond to reasons. Like advertisements, propaganda tries to cause people to perform an action without providing them with good reasons to do so.

Responses to Objections

An important objection to this third principle argues that the political (election campaign) is necessarily and ineluctably combative. According to this objection, it is pointless to seek less confrontational political forms because politics is necessarily aggressive, with winners and losers. It unavoidably involves making enemies. In the classic work *The Concept of the Political*, Carl Schmitt (2007, 95) argues that what is distinctive about the political is the division between friend and foe. He says: “the political is the most extreme and intense antagonism” (ibid., 100).

There is no doubt that we use the adjective ‘political’ to refer to antagonistic intrigues, manipulations, manoeuvres and tactics of this kind. Furthermore, words such as ‘allegiance’ and ‘affiliation’ are implicitly antagonistic too because they require the idea that those who are not part of the affiliation are enemies. However, even if Schmitt is right about how we use the word ‘political’ and even if he is correct in describing actual politics as a process of combatting enemies, this doesn’t contradict the normative thesis that good governance would transcend such politics of antagonism. Good governance institutions wouldn’t be based on political antagonism. Politics in the dirty sense of the term isn’t the only meaning of the word.

To maintain his position, someone like Schmitt would have to argue that politics without antagonism is unachievable. They would have to sustain the view that community decision-making without systematic mutual instrumentalisation is impossible. Such an argument would amount to the theory of realism in international relations. This approach holds that, in explaining and predicting the actions of states, we should adhere to some minimalistic assumptions about such actions, namely that each state is entirely self-interested, and hence will always act inevitably in a such a way as to increase its power relative to other sovereign states (cf. Waltz, 1979; Morgenthau, 1948). In reply to realism, we should argue as follows: Even if it were true as an empirical theory that describes how political actors typically behave, realism is not sufficient to show two critical claims: one that they should act in this way, and second that it is impossible for them to act differently from the way they do.

However, even if arguments for realism fail, we still need to show what is mistaken about political realism as a position. There are several threads to disentangle here. Realism as a theory in international relations makes several assumptions to be dismantled.

First, the position attempts to push to aside all normative considerations regarding how people should live together. There are two ways to interpret this idea. One would return us to the claim that the social sciences should restrict themselves entirely to describing and explaining social phenomena and should not engage in any form of normative evaluation. We have already challenged this position by arguing that the idea of a person who performs actions is already implicitly normative because actions are performed for reasons. The normative cannot be escaped and it is irreducible. The other is the realist claim that politics is a non-moral domain in which each actor (a person or an institution) is free to pursue their or its self-interests as they deem best in accordance with the law. One might compare it to certain popular views of business that see markets as amoral domains in which actors try to fulfil the only imperative: profit-making within the confines of the law. Realism assumes that antagonistic competition is either always healthy or that it is unavoidable.

Second, there is the individualism inherent in political realism. Briefly, individualism regards people as mere individuals, as self-contained atomic beings of self-interest. It is also the thesis that claims about social institutions are reducible to those about these individuals. When thought through, this position is unable to sustain a plausible view of human well-being, of institutions and of communities.

Third, in realism, the conception of self-interest in play is purely instrumental. Self-interest is conceived solely in terms of what has instrumental value, such as money and power. Furthermore, it buys into an instrumentalised conception of rationality. Roughly speaking, the ends justify the means. However, dirty means cannot bring clean ends.

In conclusion, the third principle is that a system of good governance should be positively peaceful. This means that it shouldn't be conducive to antagonisms that divide people into groups and splinter groups into individuals. We have just defended this claim about antagonisms against the idea that politics must be about antagonistic divisions and against a realist approach. However, the requirement of peacefulness has another significant implication, namely that a process of good governance will treat communities as such.

This escalating instrumentalisation of persons has significant epistemological implications, which will be a topic of a later chapter. In this chapter, we will focus the discussion on the instrumentalisation of communication largely through which the political battle tends to be won and lost. More specifically, political parties fight their war with propaganda, including among other ploys such as gerrymandering and voter suppression. While the exact definition of the term 'propaganda' may be hazy, nevertheless, it is clear that it necessarily involves the instrumentalisation of truth and people, including by-passing, manipulating or subverting the capacity of

people to respond to reasons. Like advertisements, propaganda tries to cause people to perform an action without providing them with good reasons to do so.

The Principle of Governance for Well-Being

The final and fourth normative principle is that political institutions should serve well-being. We will briefly characterise well-being, before defending this principle.

Traditionally, well-being has been understood either in terms of the satisfaction of desires or hedonistic feelings of happiness. Many social scientists favour these monistic accounts of well-being because these specify the empirical criteria of well-being in a way that is measurable. However, the concept of well-being is indelibly normative. The evaluative nature is apparent from the question 'How *should* one evaluate one's life?' Here, the question is not 'How *do* people evaluate their lives?' but rather how they *ought* to. To understand well-being is essentially to evaluate life as a whole. It concerns how we ought to live or to be, albeit that the 'ought' is non-moral.

Typically, reductive attempts to characterise well-being (such as preference functions or pleasure units) fail to account for the normative nature of the concept. Neither of these reductive accounts offer a thorough understanding of well-being, and we will briefly point out why.

Concerning preference theories, well-being is not simply a question of getting more of what one wants most, because we can desire things that are incompatible with our well-being (See Thomson 1986, 2002; Thomson, Gill & Goodson, 2021). The mere fact that that one desires X (or prefers it to Y) doesn't constitute X's being good. There is, of course, an epistemic presupposition that if a person desires X, this is because they believe it is desirable in some way, and that this belief probably reflects the fact that X actually is desirable in some way. However, this presupposition is about knowledge, and it doesn't show that the desire for X *constitutes* the value of X. Well-being as outlined in preference accounts is not even adequately characterised in terms of *informed* preferences, that is preferences one would have only if one were well informed about the thing or state of affairs in question. Informed preferences might mean that the preferences reflect better what is good but it doesn't mean that preferences constitute what is good (Thomson 1986). We cannot capture what is desirable about what one desires simply by citing the fact that one desires it. We need characterisations of its desirability. Once we have those characterisations, X remains desirable independently of being desired.

Concerning hedonic accounts of well-being, although it matters how we feel and how happy we are, and indeed this is an important aspect of well-being, hedonistic accounts misunderstand this feature of *eudaemonia.* First, it matters *why*

we feel happy, that is, the conditions of life and activities that make us happy also matter non-instrumentally. Having friends might make us feel happy but it also matters that we have friends, and our life involves friendships with people. This implies that hedonism is mistaken to affirm that only hedonistic experiences matter non-instrumentally. The activities of life also matter non-derivatively. Second, feelings of pleasure aren't simply causal by-products of the activities we perform. Rather they are the ways we engage with and perceive those activities. They are emotional cognitions of the values of our activities. This means that they aren't separate from the activities and cannot be regarded as independent units of pleasure.

In contrast to what is described in the preference and pleasure theories, well-being must be characterised in terms of the four dimensions along which we live. Being-well is constituted by non-instrumental value along these necessary dimensions of our way of being. As we shall see, these are: (1) the activities, experiences and processes that make up our lives; (2) our awareness of life's contents as valuable; (3) our relations; and (4) self-consciousness. These are four necessary aspects of any activity, as well as dimensions of living a human life. So, the four dimensions are the framework for defining living well.

First, we live through our outer activities, which are complex webs of activities that are nested within wider activities and processes. The value of these activities consists in the extent to which they accord with the patterns of desirability as revealed in our desires Thomson 1986; Thomson, Gill & Goodson, 2021).

Second, we also live in our awareness. For the value of our activities to count towards our living well, we must be aware of them as valuable by being connected appropriately those activities. This connection often consists in a range of cognitive emotions and feelings of happiness and pleasure. Because of this, our well-being is partly constituted by the quality of our awareness, especially emotional consciousness.

Third, we live in relationships, which typically involve doing things *for* other people and being *with* others. It is part of our well-being to be with and to do things with and for others. Minimally, other people are part of ones life simply insofar as one relates to them as people. People are part of our life in a fuller sense insofar as we have good quality relationships with them. The relational aspect of our well-being involves not only our relationships with other people, as well as our relations with our body, the eco-systems and the planet.

Fourth, our lives are also constituted by our self-consciousness. It is part of our life that one is aware of oneself in micro and macro ways. At the micro-level, one are aware of oneself in our daily actions and experiences as we live them. We also have a macro-sense of our past and future. Together these aspects form our self-perceptions and the self-relations that we may perhaps call 'identity'.

When we make claims about the nature of well-being with these thick evaluative concepts, we face the challenge of how these claims relate to empirical facts. If the concept of well-being is evaluatively rich, then how can we determine empirically what well-being is? If someone's well-being has improved, this must be in virtue of some other facts about their life. We require some empirical criteria for what constitutes well-being. Many social scientists ignore or evade the normative dimensions of well-being in part because they assume that such questions cannot be answered adequately within the framework of a normatively rich theory. The four-dimensional analysis provides an initial reply to this challenge that doesn't reduce well-being to a monist conception (Thomson, Gill & Goodson, 2020).

For political theory insofar as it pertains to good governance, we need the normative conception of people living well as characterised earlier. This conception fits the axiological thesis also argued for earlier in the chapter: well-being matters because people matter. Because people are non-instrumentally valuable, our lives matter and, because of this, the relevant parts and aspects of our lives matter. This latter constitutes our well-being. In short, well-being is non-instrumentally important because human beings are. This is why our account of well-being should be rooted in the different dimensions of human living, each of which will have different evaluative criteria. Well-being is shaped by the structure of our lives.

There is a second reason why we need this account. The characterisation of well-being accords with the axiological thesis argued for earlier *also* because it shows how non-instrumentalisation is an integral aspect of well-being and why non-instrumentalisation is fundamental to well-being.

In short, non-instrumentalisation isn't a moral concern distinct from happiness. Non-instrumentalisation is an ineradicable component of well-being, and it applies to each of the four dimensions of well-being. Let us examine this point in more detail. Insofar as we instrumentalise our actions and activities, we do not engage in them for their non-instrumental value. For example, when our lives are dedicated to achievement, we instrumentalise our activities for the sake of the goals rather than engaging in them for their own sake. Second, when we instrumentalise our activities, we cannot appreciate their non-instrumental value. For example, we can be too busy chasing the relevant goals to appreciate the action and to take delight in being alive. Furthermore, insofar as our emotional awareness is instrumentalised, our inner lives serve social and economic functions that don't necessarily harmonise well with our well-being. Instrumentalised awareness is focused on goals and not the valuable aspects of living for their own sake. This means our awareness is attuned primarily to efficiency in achieving goals and not to the enjoyment of the activity as such. Third, it is integral to well-being that we have intimate or close relationships with people *as people* such that they form a part of our lives. However, this is impossible insofar as

these relationships are instrumentalised to some set of goals. The instrumentalisation of relationships is a recipe for loneliness and alienation. Finally, self-consciousness: it is a powerful form of ill-being, when one perceives oneself as commodity or object. In conclusion, non-instrumentalisation is an essential core to the notion of well-being or *eudaimonia*, which in turn forms a normative basis of political organisation.

Purely political economic concerns should typically serve well-being. Politics will have no meaning if it does not enable people to live better.[24] When we treat political interests as if they were intrinsically valuable, such as winning the election, we instrumentalise people. The current political system tends to support existing power structures, which contradicts the principles of non-instrumentalisation and equality. The state tends to support harmful inequality by systematically favoring the rich over the poor.

The idea that political institutions ought to serve the well-being of the whole community shouldn't be controversial. Yet, in the current political theory, it is. Indeed, there is a lot of contention *apparently* regarding this point, which often relates to issues concerning the role and the size of government. Shouldn't governments seek above all to provide the socio-economic infrastructure in which people can autonomously pursue their well-being together? If governments seek to improve people's well-being directly, won't they risk interfering in people's lives?

For this book, this specific question is premature because it concerns the role and functioning of *governments*, which we will discuss in later chapters of this work. The same applies to the *state.* As a reminder, this book attempts to provide a new structural vision of the political system. It starts with the principles and values that underpin participatory democracy; it then examines the nature and role of government and the state within a participatory system. Once we establish the main aim of political activity, we can explore the part that government and state can play, which is a distinct issue.

Nevertheless, in this chapter, a broad theoretical concern remains. Traditionally, a whole range of questions are typically portrayed as an antagonism between happiness and autonomy. On the one hand, according to Utilitarian thinking, all values are reduced to the promotion of happiness. This seems to lend credence to a quasi-socialist agenda that warrants government actions aimed at the promotion of happiness even when these contravene people's autonomy. On the other hand, according to liberal thinking, morality concerns the conditions for individual

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24 This isn't quite true because participatory processes and dialogues also have a non-instrumental value.

autonomy. This seems to lend credence to a conservative agenda that warrants government actions only insofar as they protect and respect people's autonomy, even when this leads to a lowering of society's happiness or utility. Many liberal societies seem to be caught between these two poles that presuppose a sharp antinomy between utility and liberty.

We need to challenge this antagonism. Theoretically, the well-being framework outlined in this book provides a conception of well-being that transcends the dichotomy between a monist conception of utility, and an individualistic conception of autonomy. According to our framework for well-being, this is a false dichotomy. Well-being is multidimensional and must include the features of a person's life in virtue of which they are a self-conscious agent acting in collaboration with others. What is usually thought of as autonomy must be reconceived as a set of social capacities integral to our well-being which is fundamentally relational. In short, autonomy is an aspect of well-being. This is why non-instrumentalisation is an important aspect of well-being in all four dimensions. When a person is instrumentalised, for instance, by being exploited, or even by enslaving themselves for their own economic pursuit, it constitutes harm in itself, quite apart from its other damaging effects. A great mistake of Utilitarianism is to suggest that agency can be excluded as a primary component of well-being. In contrast, a great error of Kantian-based liberal ethics is to regard agency only as a moral issue rather than as a key aspect of well-being.

Furthermore, autonomy as contrasted with utility is typically understood individualistically. Individualism can only conceive of institutions and communities in terms of contracts between individuals for their own personal benefit. It cannot comprehend actions except individualistically. This rules out collective action as a non-reductive category. In other words, collective action must be reduced to the coordinated but separate actions of individuals. Under this view, institutions *per se* don't act and a community *as such* cannot act, and as a collective, it cannot carry out actions such as proposing recommendations and deciding on policies – only individuals can do this. Clearly, such an individualistic view seriously hampers the way we characterise participatory democracy. It misunderstands the role of community in the constitution of well-being.

The overall conclusion of this discussion is that well-being vs autonomy is a false opposition because, when properly understood, well-being includes autonomy and agency. This point is important because the claim that governance institutions should serve human well-being looks contentious when we assume the opposition or dichotomy. Without it, the claim is innocuous.

Additionally, these principles already include ecological concerns because good relations with the natural world is an integral part of our well-being and be-

cause positive peacefulness includes the non-instrumentalisation of ecological systems, as explained in our other works (Gill and Thomson, 2019).

Conclusion: From Dirt to Sky

In this chapter, we have outlined four principles that a system of good governance should enshrine, and we have argued that only a participatory democracy would embody the first two. The second two elaborate basic principles that such a democracy should instantiate: positive peace and well-being. These lofty ideals seem very distant from the current political realities of every country in the world. This stark contrast invites two simple but straightforward questions: Why? And what should we do? While we cannot pretend to answer them, especially in this early stage of the book, nevertheless, it is appropriate to propose a pathway towards their answer.

Any reply to the first question has to recognise three factors, which fuse in an interesting manner. First, every actual political system is always built out of the political system of its own past by means of compromises, past accidents, individual efforts, and social, cultural and historical tendencies. Second, almost every political system is defined by noble ideals that it itself has betrayed. Even the most cynical political agents operate within a system that had elevated aims at the core of its origin. Usually, the initial defining moral narrative is quickly subverted by the means seemingly necessary to achieve it. For instance, we use weapons in the name of peace. We exploit in the name of prosperity. We demonise in the name of fairness. We impose in the name of freedom. At root, these are all processes of instrumentalisation. Party A or people of view B or even individual person C can believe sincerely that they have the major ingredients necessary for the progress and well-being of the society or community. Therefore, such progress and well-being seem to depend essentially on their acquiring the power to put these ingredients into practice or to implement them.

This necessarily invites a fatal combination of two factors: an instrumental conception of rationality in combination with a conception of power as control over others. The instrumental conception of rationality holds that choosing what is rational must be equated with selecting the most efficient means to a desired end. In this equating, the conception of rationality fails to distinguish means/ends from what is instrumentally/non-instrumentally valuable. It thereby embraces the lethal doctrine that all means as such necessarily have only instrumental value, and that anything of non-instrumental value must be an end or goal. In short, everything that is a means can be used as a tool: it is to be instrumentalised. And what is to be prized for itself are the goals we have (Thomson, Gill & Goodson,

2020). These two theses echo the severe instrumentalisation of war as described by Sun Tzu, the predecessor of Machiavelli.

The instrumental conception of rationality is the extension of instrumentalisation into the definition of the rational. When combined with the conception of power as control over others, we quickly arrive at the conclusions that we should eliminate or manipulate or silence those who are obstacles to progress, as defined by *our* set of goals, and that, necessarily, those who are obstacles to progress are simply those who prevent us from attaining sufficient power. Therefore, in the name of the good, we have to do what we would otherwise recognise as bad. This is a logical consequence of an instrumentalised and divisive conception of power.

Third, in every society, the institutions of governance are necessarily subject to the economic tendency to concentrate wealth into the hands of a few elites. Those with money can buy political power to help them gain more money more easily. The institutions of governance are subject to this tendency because the processes of governance are inherently ones of instrumentalisation, and as such, they are already instrumentalised. This means that they are necessarily open themselves to being used. In this way, politics instrumentalises the instrumentalisers. Parliament instrumentalises the ordinary voters by turning them precisely into that, ordinary voters. But parliament and congress can be brought. Even though governments can rule, to do so, they must cater for the interests of the powerful. For instance, central banks and treasuries cannot easily contradict the demands of markets, which are instrumentalised for the wealthy. Legislation must protect economic growth and the reality of such growth is it has already institutionally built into it so that the wealthy 1% gain much more than the remaining 99%. In short, the political system instrumentalises ordinary people by relegating them to this status, i. e. being ordinary, and the political system itself is open to being captured or to being instrumentalised by the economically powerful.

The path towards an answer to the question 'Why?' must include these three factors: (1) historical contingency and structurally-defined tendencies; (2) an instrumental conception of rationality and the attendant conception of power; and (3) power that favours the economically dominant as against the rest.

A preliminary answer to the second question "What should we do?" can be relatively simple: we should design and build institutions that don't instrumentalise. This reply is a precondition of this book. However, one needs to distinguish good-health from the remedies for ill-health. In society that is plagued by systematic inequality, racism, exploitation and environmental abuse, this distinction may appear to be obtusely academic. It gets obfuscated. But we need to insist on it because protests will always tend to procure remedies, treat symptoms and engender reforms to an existing system. As good as these may be, and as needed as they are,

these do not amount to a transformation of the system itself. The needed transformation is directed towards a system that consists of institutions that don't instrumentalise. This would apply to the domains such as economics, education, as well as governance.

How can societies' efforts to ascend towards the lofty or high ideals avoid ending up in the mud of instrumentalisation? Assuming instrumental conceptions of rationality and divisive conceptions of power, it looks as if everything we touch turns to dirt. Therefore, we need to free ourselves from the implementations of these conceptions. Given the analysis sketched above, one cannot answer the question about what to do by establishing a set of goals, and arguing for a plan of action and set of policies that pave the roads to their attainment with *instrumentalisation.* This point establishes the conundrum that we will address in the final chapter of the work: how to set-up non-instrumentalising institutions of governance without recourse to instrumentalising (or political actions that instrumentalise)? The code for the answer is already present in an embryonic form: the institutions that we set up need to *embody* rather than trying to attain the relevant non-instrumental values.

Another fundamental point to tackle in these deliberations is what Hume famously declared, namely:

> Nothing appears more surprising to those, who consider human affairs with a philosophical eye, than the easiness with which the many are governed by the few; and the implicit submission, with which men resign their own sentiments and passions to those of their rulers. When we enquire by what means this wonder is effected, we shall find, that, as Force is always on the side of the governed, the governors have nothing to support them but opinion. It is therefore, on opinion only that government is founded.[25]

Hume's statement underlines the crucial and neglected importance of epistemology to politics: the power of the rulers depends on the quiescence or submission of the people, and their inertia depends on the beliefs that arise as a consequence of and in support of their powerlessness. In short, the system whereby people are easily ruled, and hence exploited, seemingly depends on their lacking core epistemological virtues. Dominating power requires a system of beliefs that supports this domination.

Among these supporting beliefs, the most prevalent is the idea that there are no viable alternatives. Patriotism and many other ideologies assume that what we have cannot be improved profoundly. It can only be tinkered with. In this line, for

25 Hume's Essay IV: "Of the First Principles of Government", in *Essays, Moral, Political, and Literary*

instance, Churchill once quipped that representative democracy was the worst form of government apart from all others. Of course, this book is dedicated to the deep falsity of his proposition. Participatory democracy would or could be much better than what we have now.

In a similar vein, Churchill also jibbed that the best argument against democracy is a five-minute conversation with the ordinary voter. However, as true as his observation may be, it ignores that the current non-participatory system tends to produce people who lack the epistemological virtues necessary for a participatory collective or collaborative governance. It is like a self-fulfilling prophecy. The conditions that make representative democracy look inevitably like the only option are those that make participatory democracy appear impossible. Representative democracy, and its companion, capitalism, are like a married couple, and together, they breed the conditions in which there is a ruling class that has an abiding interest in the compliance of the ruled. To this end, Churchill should have thought the following to himself: 'I am equal with these people. Under what social conditions would a 5-minute conversation lead me to think: "how might we talk for longer? What might I learn from the people?"'. Indeed, we can reply to Churchill that 90-minute, well-facilitated community assemblies and conversations would constitute strong support for democracy. When supplemented by the necessary practices, such as listening, and dialogue, such assemblies can work.

Despite its insightfulness about epistemology, about beliefs, Hume's statement misses a fundamental point, namely: even if all opinions that allow the many to be governed by the few were removed, there would still remain the question: "How could the many organise themselves to resist the few or to institute new institutions?" The political issue isn't just a question of opinion. It is also a question of facilitation, coordination and organisation. It is here that we tend to encounter a puzzling and deep paradox: when one sets the many against the few, the ruled against the rulers, how can the many be organised without creating other rulers? How can we avoid reproducing the same system of divisive power in a different garb?

Indeed, both conservatism and Marxism stumble on their failure to answer this question well. Conservatism answers: let's stick to well-tried traditions; by contrast, the traditional Marxism answers: let's go for the dictatorship of the proletariat. In the final analysis, the traditional Marxist answer reproduces similar power structures to the conservative. So, we are stuck with the paradox: if the State is set up as an entity that is in opposition to the people, then how can the people organise themselves in order to transform the State? Doesn't this new organisation thereby become the State or a rival state? The apparent paradox is: the alternatives to the state appear to be simply another state.

In sum, we conclude this chapter with two unanswered but fundamental questions. How can political actions, which typically have the tendency to instrumentalise, create non-instrumentalised governance institutions? And, how can we organise and express the sovereignty of the people in such a way that doesn't reproduce the instrumentalising power structures as seen in the current system?

Limitations

This work has some significant limitations. First, clearly, a new governance system has to accompanied by an allied set of transformations in the economic system. This huge topic is the subject of another volume in this series. Second, a new political system, at local, regional and national levels, would need to be integrated into a new global system. The current system is unable to deal with fundamental global problems such as global warming and a proposed new global system must address such weaknesses. However, a full analysis and discussion of a new global or transnational political system is clearly another work or volume. Third, this isn't a book about theories of social change. For example, it doesn't propose ways to make our society more democratic. What it does is to envisage an non-instrumentalising political system, but it does not detail the pathways to the realisation of that system. We will initiate some discussions in this direction, but only very briefly in the final chapter. Fourth, there will be very important differences between a non-instrumentalised political system in different cultures and countries. We are suggesting a functioning framework for a participatory democracy, on the understanding that this frame will be filled very differently in diverse cultures.

Appendix: A Non-Kantian Argument

The principle of non-instrumentalisation is usually thought to be wedded to Kant's account of morality, which makes it vulnerable to some serious objections (See Thomson 1999 and 2002). Since the basis of our argument is *seemingly* Kantian, we can answer some of these objections by explaining the ways in which our approach isn't Kantian.

First, Kant's main aim is to elucidate the concept of morality. In sharp contrast, we focus on what is valuable *per se*, rather than morality. Above all, non-instrumentalisation is part and parcel of human well-being. This latter point doesn't fit well into Kantian seemingly puritanical distinction between morality and happiness, Kant is surprisingly empiricist about happiness. His morality/happiness dichotomy is sharp: morality is absolute and is not directly concerned with one's

own well-being, and happiness is a concept relative to people's subjective likes. Arguably, Kant's notion of morality is Platonist and his conception of well-being is empiricist. The notion of well-being that we have sketched is multi-dimensional, and normative, which doesn't fit well into this dichotomy.

Moreover, non-instrumentalisation is an integral part or component of well-being as it requires that one doesn't treat or regard oneself instrumentally. In this way, our conception of non-instrumentalisation does not require a Kantian moral programme.

Secondly, Kant's conception is absolute and ours is not. His notion of the Categorical Imperative is usually understood as an absolute moral injunction: one shouldn't morally violate the Moral Law, and this imperative is not overridden in any circumstance by other considerations, such as those pertaining to the harmful consequences of an action. For example, under this reading of Kant, one shouldn't lie, even to save innocent lives.[26] However, our thesis is not about morality: it concerns what is valuable without laying claim to being absolute or to always constituting a conclusive reason for action. This means that the assertion that well-being is constituted *inter alia* by non-instrumentalised relationships doesn't mean that we should never instrumentalise. It doesn't imply the rule that there is a conclusive non-circumstantial reason to not instrumentalise.

Thirdly, Kant's theory is strongly anti-consequentialist. For Kant, the morality of an action doesn't reside in its effects at all but rather only in the will that defines the action. For Kant, for an action to be moral, it is necessary and sufficient that the subjective maxim of the agent's will should accord with the objective principle of the Moral Law. This means that the results of one's action (even the intended ones) are not directly morally relevant.[27] In diametric opposition to this, there is the consequentialist claim that results are the only feature of our actions that is morally directly relevant. Many moral theories are either Kantian or consequentialist. The consequentialist claims that only the consequences of an action are directly morally relevant, and the Kantian theory argues that the results of actions are never directly morally relevant. Between these two extremes lies a host of other positions. We are not advancing either of these two extreme views. In our case, with regard to democratic political spaces and institutions, our argument will touch both their nature and their results. For example, in thinking about democracy normatively, we need to consider the nature of democratic systems, but this doesn't preclude their harmful and beneficial effects.

26 See Onora O'Neil Reith Lecture entitled: A Question of Trust

27 Kant, *Ground Work*

Finally, Kant's theory is based on a metaphysical theory of the will that we disavow. We disavowed it when we claimed in an earlier endnote that the difference between persons and non-persons is one of degree and not one of kind. According to Kant, the will is noumenal, beyond the world of cause and effect. Therefore, Kant's theory would oppose any attempt to account for the agency of persons that renders agency part of the natural world. An absolute theory such as Kant's cannot make sense of the idea that agency is matter of degree, that, for instance, dogs are agents, albeit less so that adult humans.

The idea of instrumentalisation has suffered intellectual bad press for other reasons. In the contemporary social sciences, any idea that is worth its salt has to be measurable, and the concept of instrumentalisation *apparently* cannot be measured. To be clear, the proposition in question is an empirical assertion of the form 'A instrumentalises B'. The difficulty of measuring instrumentalisation is due to various factors. First, what counts as being instrumentalised will vary in different social contexts. Furthermore, we need the idea of different degrees of instrumentalisation: some forms of instrumentalisation are clearly more severe than others. Moreover, the notion of instrumentalisation is intentional. To instrumentalise is to *act* in a certain way. All actions are intentional, meaning that they are defined by their content, which is described *as such* only *intensionally*[28]. When we describe an action *as an action*, it has to be connected to the relevant *content.* For example, my action of turning on the light may cause a power failure in the electrical generator, but this doesn't mean that this failure was something *I did.* In short, the relevant verb 'to instrumentalise' is intensional. This means that we can instrumentalise a person under one set of descriptions and not under another.

However, these factors aren't impediments to measurement *given two points.* On the one hand, it is an error to define a concept operationally in terms of the way that it is measured. It is one thing to characterise a phenomenon and quite another to measure it. Without such a distinction, the whole idea of better and worse ways to measure a phenomenon would not even make sense. On the other hand, once we accept that measurement doesn't need to constitute a standardised definition, we are free to propose local purpose-built measures. As we explain elsewhere, we need the idea of context-bound measurements: ways of measuring don't have to be applicable in all contexts (Thomson, Gill & Goodson, 2020).

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28 A linguistic context is intensional (with an s) when it is referentially transparent. This means that the substitution of co-referential terms may change the truth-value of the sentence as a whole. For example, in the sentence 'Lois Lane believes that Superman can fly', the context formed by 'believes that…' is intensional because substituting 'Superman' with 'Clarke Kent' changes whether the sentence is true.

One can define a way to measure a phenomenon that applies only to a limited range of contexts for a restricted range of purposes. This idea is especially important for concepts that context-sensitive and intentional. In other words, we can measure phenomena that are characterised with intentional concepts but this requires giving up the assumption that measurements must be standardised. We don't need to hold on to this assumption once we realise that operational definitions are a deep error. Once we relinquish the assumption, the issue of how we should measure a phenomenon is partly a matter of context and purpose.

Chapter 2
Consensus-Building

The global history of consensus-based decision-making is older than that of representative democracy. In the ancient world, especially in small communities in Africa, consensus required no vote, and communities took the time to reach consensus in their collective decision-making. In many communities, consensus was part and parcel of process of making decisions (Graeber, 2013). In this chapter, we shall argue that consensus is central to participatory democracy and reconceptualise some contemporary definitions and practices of consensus.

In the previous chapter we argued for the thesis that anything less than a participatory democracy would instrumentalise people in various ways. It would do so by excluding them from the processes of making policies that affect their lives; it would so by allowing others to rule over them by making those policies for them. It would so by allowing the ruling groups to manipulate the thinking and vote of the majority through propaganda campaigns and other techniques. It would do so by fermenting antagonisms between people to build up allegiances and distrust in order to engineer people's voting patterns. Forms of political instrumentalisation involve: exploitation, manipulation, domination, discrimination, exclusion, and alienation. Given that a good governance system must be participatory, the next step is to argue that it should also be based on consensus, rather than voting.[29] That the main decision-making processes of a political community should be based on consensus. This point is contentious and needs to be supported.

One objection is the argument that it isn't possible to reach consensus. Another is the contention that consensus is impractical. However, some people might even object to consensus being a social good at all, because they regard pluralism or the diversity of beliefs as an essential aspect of any healthy society (Isaiah Berlin, 2002; Rescher, 1993). According to this objection, the imperative for consensus drives out pluralism. For this reason, according to this objection, political institutions shouldn't be built around a demand for consensus but rather around toleration for a diversity of belief.

This objection can be strengthened. It seems possible have participatory democracy that doesn't require consensus. Although we have already argued that the concept of good governance requires a democracy that is directly participative,

29 In our case, we do not rule out 'polling' as if to feel the general 'pulse' of the community. Polling for such a purpose will be described in Chapter 5, especially in the context of digital media as public spaces for consensus-based collective decision-making.

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it might be contended that this doesn't require consensus. For instance, at the conclusion of a session, the assembly could vote on a set of propositions which would pass with a majority vote or with some previously agreed percentage. People's assemblies are a form of non-consensus-based participatory democracy The objection to our position would be that voting is a more practical arrangement than consensus.

One major objective in this chapter is to show why good participatory democratic processes are necessarily consensus-building processes. Thus, we need to reply to these two objections. In relation to the first, we will argue that consensus and pluralism are not incompatible. A healthy democratic society would involve both consensus and pluralism as social goods. Democratic institutions should not be built merely around the toleration of diversity. In reply to the second objection, we will establish that seeking anything less than consensus, or people making decisions together, would constitute an undesirable weakening of democracy. We will show that participatory democratic processes should be consensus-building, even when it is difficult to facilitate.

These arguments require a definition of consensus. Consensus is usually conceived as an agreement regarding a set of propositions. However, it also requires a specification of the kind of propositions in question. Furthermore, we shall argue that consensus must be conceived as more than just an agreement about a set of propositions. It is also a set of social relations that allow people to discuss and decide harmoniously, even when there is propositional disagreement. This means that consensus-building processes should not be conceived solely as an elimination of disagreement but rather as a process of collective decision-making, which requires collective epistemological virtues. It is a collaborative inquiry in facilitated public spaces in which people share, think and decide together.

In this chapter, we will take a number of steps to argue for the centrality of consensus in participatory democracy. The first considers the nature of consensus by challenging conventional views, including those of pragmatism. In the second step, we will discuss why it is erroneous to suggest that consensus must exclude pluralism. Thirdly, we will discuss how consensus, as opposed to voting, embodies the fundamental principles outlined for participatory democracy. Finally, we will integrate the different arguments into a conception of consensus as key to participatory democracy.

Consensus in Pragmatism

Consensus is typically defined as coming to a general agreement regarding a set of propositions. Consensus so defined is a central idea in contemporary Western po-

litical thought. This claim usually takes its cue from traditions in which specific key concepts are understood in terms of a hypothetical agreement. Such analysis is variously applied to truth, rationality and justice, and is relatively mainstream in 20th century political philosophy, especially in pragmatism. This approach can be found in the works of various writers, such as Rawls, Habermas, and Rorty. We will briefly examine these authors' appeal to consensus, in order to argue against it. The overall idea is to show how consensus doesn't need to be wedded to the approach of these authors thereby to save it from the complaint that the concept of consensus doesn't acknowledge sufficiently the importance of pluralism.

Rawls

John Rawls stresses the importance of public reasoning in consensus-building. In his book *A Theory of Justice*, Rawls (1999) construes justice as fairness to defend a liberal vision of the good society. According to Rawls, the principles of justice are those that would form part of an ideal hypothetical social contract. This means that the principles would be agreed by a group of rational self-interested persons as if they were placed behind a *veil of ignorance.* Rawls calls this 'the original position'. In the original position, behind the veil of ignorance, they would not know their personal circumstances, social position, race and gender, or skills and abilities. The veil also prevents them from knowing the actual political and economic situation of the society in which they live. Rawls argues that, from behind the veil of ignorance, people would rationally choose to adopt certain principles, the implementation of which would constitute a fair and just society. Therefore, Rawls conceives justice as a hypothetical agreement under ideal conditions (Thomson, 2022).

This conception assumes that people are self-interested and are *not* concerned with the ends or well-being of others. The original position also assumes that the participants in the social contract have two moral powers: rationality and reasonableness. They are rational in that they have a capacity to form, revise and follow a conception of the good life. The people behind the veil are also reasonable in that they have the capacity to cooperate and abide by agreements even when this harms their own interests, so long as others are willing to do the same. From the position of relative ignorance, it is rational to choose to live in a society based on two principles of justice.[30] The original position forces us into a certain

30 The two principles that the participants would choose in the original position are as follows in Rawls's own words: "First Principle: Each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive

kind of impartiality. The duty to comply with these principles is based on the idea that the principles accord with our reflectively formed moral judgments. In summary, although known for his procedural approach to justice, in effect, Rawls argues for a *subjectivist* conception of justice based on a non-subjectivist view of individual rationality.[31] There are no truths about what is just beyond what people would agree to under certain ideal conditions.[32]

Habermas

Habermas adopts a similar subjectivist approach, but more broadly applied: he argues that the concept of agreement is necessary to define truth and morality. In *The Theory of Communicative Action*, he elaborates his theory that norms pertaining to sincerity, truth and rightness are integral to the communicative act (Habermas, 1984). For instance, truth should be understood as rational acceptability given the relevant ideal communicative and argumentative practices. According to Habermas, we try to settle factual disputes with processes of justification and argumentation. Such practices implicitly involve a conception of truth understood as the rational acceptability of assertions in ideal conditions. Habermas suggests that these conditions comprise 'an ideal speech situation'. In other words, truth should be defined in terms of what rational people would accept under ideal conditions. As we shall see, this too is a subjectivist definition.

Habermas applies the same approach to other notions of normative validity. For instance, with respect to moral rightness, he constructs a theory of discourse ethics for justice, much in the same way as he did for truth. The basic argument is that validity claims pertaining to justice are inherent in the relevant shared communicative practices. In this case, the practices concern how we settle disputes regarding conflicts of interest through processes of argumentation. These practices implicitly presuppose the norm of justice as the idea of universal rational acceptability. Like other moral norms, justice includes the idea of reaching a settlement that would satisfy all participants in ideal circumstances. Despite the differences,

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total system of equal basic liberties compatible with a similar system of liberty for all. Second Principle: Social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are both: a) to the greatest benefit of the least advantaged, consistent with the just savings principle, and b) attached to offices and positions open to all under conditions of fair equality of opportunity."

31 Subjectivist conceptions of justice typically involve the idea that justice is dependent on individual subjective preferences or personal judgments.

32 cf. Jean Hampton, 1980, ch 5, 201 on Andrea Dworkin and Rawls. Hampton assumes that Rawls accepts a universal value without stressing how his position is meta-ethically subjectivist.

like Rawls, Habermas accepts a subjectivist definition of justice, e.g. there are no truths about what is just beyond what people would agree to under certain ideal conditions.

For Habermas, a general principle of discourse is that a rule of action or choice is justified if and only if all those affected by the choice could accept it in a reasonable discourse. In moral discourse, we are concerned with obligations pertaining to how conflicts of interest can be adjudicated fairly for the common good. In this context, the discourse principle would require a principle of universalisation: a moral norm is valid if and only if all concerned could jointly accept, without coercion, the foreseeable consequences and side-effects of its general observance, for the interests of each individual. This kind of analysis can be used to show how other basic moral notions are implicit in the argumentative practices of resolving conflicts of interest.

Rorty

In *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, Rorty (1979) attempts to refute representationalism, the claim that linguistic mental states represent reality. He aims to debunk the claim that knowledge consists in an accurate set of representations of what is outside the mind, and also the thesis that the mind consists in having of such representations or ideas. He argues in favour of an alternative positive account of knowledge, which he describes as 'epistemological behaviorism' (ibid., 174). According to this view, we should explain rationality in terms of "what society lets us say" rather than the other way around. Knowledge is a question of acquiring habits of action for coping with reality. As a set of habits, it consists in causal relations with the rest of the world, and not mental representations. So conceived, beliefs can be justified by citing other beliefs in ways that satisfy the social standards implicit in practices of justification.

These practices may vary from society to society. However, any belief is open to revision if it fails to cohere with the other beliefs that a person has. Because he holds that such justification is relative to our practices, Rorty is a relativist concerning justification. In other words, for Rorty, our ethnocentric perspective cannot be privileged as more true than that of any other culture. Many of our cherished values and practices can be justified only in circular fashion. Rorty claims that justification is 'a matter of conversation and social practice.'

Rorty's pragmatist view implies that any attempt to go beyond a minimal theory of truth is futile. The notion of truth has no content over and above justification or rational warrant which is relative to what a society deems reasonable in its practices. The concept of truth should be explained minimally in terms of how

the word 'true' functions linguistically, that is in accordance with the following schema: 'the sentence 'S' is true if and only if S.'

Pragmatism

In the pragmatist tradition, truth is often defined in terms of consensus (understood as agreement). For instance, Peirce (1910/1994) argues that what is true should be defined as what a community of ideal believers would converge on. He asserts that "truth is that concordance of an abstract statement with the ideal limit towards which endless investigation would tend to bring scientific belief" (ibid. 5.565). In particular, truth in science can be defined as the theories that a community of rational scientists would ideally agree on in the long run. Roughly, a pragmatist view holds that truth must be conceived as what we would arrive at if we believe *well*, in a rational or good manner. The main argument in favour of this broad strategy is that any attempt to understand the concept of truth (or what is true) independently of how we arrive or grasp truths will end up as an endorsement of an absolutist or Platonic definition. Any attempt to define truth independently of what we would believe under ideal conditions renders truth as a transcendent concept.[33]

In summary, as we have just seen, the pragmatist approach defines concepts such as truth, rationality or justice either in terms of ideal agreement or agreement regarding the presuppositions of shared practices. Even Rawls, who has an objective conception of truth, nevertheless, has a theory of justice which adopts a subjectivist approach: justice is defined by agreement or consensus under ideal conditions. Habermas, Rorty and Pierce have a broadly similar approach to the concept of truth.

Beyond Pragmatism

We will now show in what ways this pragmatist approach is erroneous, and how an appropriate understanding of minimal objectivity is important for consensus in participatory governance. Readers who are less interested in this section might skip forward to the next.

33 We haven't cited John Dewey because Dewey advocates a pragmatist approach with regard to meaning rather than truth, and therefore, he doesn't violate this distinction.

Let us concentrate on truth. The problem with the pragmatist definition of truth is that it requires specifying what it is for someone to believe *well* or *ideally*, but without the guiding idea that beliefs aim at what is true independent of our beliefs. Such an approach requires that belief-independent truth isn't already presupposed in the inquiry. The pragmatist affirms: "One can only understand truth in terms of what we believe when believing is done in a virtuous and responsible way." This is the reverse of saying: "It requires the idea of beliefs being true to understand what counts as believing in a virtuous and responsible way". Our contention is that the first is impossible without the second. In the above 'virtuous' refers to the epistemological virtues.

There are four considerations in support of this contention.

First, when we assert that, under ideal conditions, people will tend to believe what is true, this isn't a tautology. However, if the pragmatist proposal were correct, it would be a tautology. This is because the same claim for the pragmatists would simply become "Under ideal conditions, people will tend to believe what they tend to believe under ideal conditions." Likewise, when we assert that, "Even under ideal conditions, people may believe what is false", this isn't a contradiction. This shows that the two predicates 'is believed under ideal conditions' and 'is true' don't mean the same. They can come apart. Because they can come apart, it is therefore not a tautology when they converge, and not a contradiction when they diverge.

Second, subjectivist views define a term such as 'true' or 'just' in terms of the decisions of an authority, albeit a hypothetical ideal one. However, decided or believed by an authority isn't the same as 'is true'. To see this, let use 'A' to refer to some authority such as an ideal rational person or community or an omniscient being. The sentence 'proposition P is true' and the sentence 'proposition P is believed by A' do not have the same meaning. This can be seen through iterations: p; 'p' is true; ''p' is true' is true and so on. For any true proposition, there is a meta-proposition to assert that it is true. We can continue this iteration *ad infinitum.* This is because 'is true' is logically transparent. In sharp contrast, the sentence 'P is believed by A' cannot be iterated *ad infinitum* because it isn't logically transparent.

The theory that 'p is true' means the same as 'p is believed by A' itself requires the notion of belief-independent truth, which one needs this notion to state the theory itself (Thomson, 1992). The truth of the relevant sentences about what *A believes* is presupposed. To affirm that the sentence in question is true is not to assert that it itself is believed by A. For instance, ''P is believed by A' is true' isn't the same as ''P is believed by A' is believed by A'. Because the notion of 'is true' is presupposed in claims about what A believes, what A believes cannot be used as a sub-

stitute for what is true.[34] The very claims themselves about what an ideal community would believe have to be considered as true for the pragmatist analysis to appear reasonable. The same kind of argument applies to the predicate 'is believed by God'. This predicate cannot replace 'is true' because one needs to employ the second to even assert that P is believed by God. In short, the notion of truth is presupposed by claims about what A, or some ideal agent, believes.

The third consideration seeks to identify what is going on with these first two points. Fundamentally, it is that the notion 'is true' is presupposed by the idea of believing: to believe is to think true. But the reverse is not the case: a statement that no-one believes can be true. This has two implications: it is logically possible for A to believe something false, and it is logically possible for P to be true without it being the case that A believes this.

The fourth consideration provides an even more general diagnosis. In abstract terms, the pragmatist approach tends to confuse ontology with epistemology, and both with semantics. 'What is true' counts as ontology, and 'how one might know this' counts as epistemology. The second cannot be a substitute for the first because the second must presuppose the first. We have just seen that. Epistemology and the practice of gathering evidence need the idea of the truth and falsity of propositions that is independent of whether they are or would be believed by anyone. Otherwise, we will find ourselves committed to the idea of some ideal community or agent who cannot make mistakes and cannot be ignorant. It is a necessary part of the goal of knowledge-gathering practices that they are aimed at such belief-independent truths. Metaphorically, pragmatism tries to define a destination in terms of what counts as good journey. Metaphorically, the objection to this strategy is that you cannot define a location in this way without presupposing that it is a destination that exists independently of a journey. However, the claims that some pragmatists make about truth are more applicable to the semantic. Semantic meaning is socially constructed, even if the truth and falsity of these claims so constructed isn't.

Some quick qualifications. As we shall see, the realism that we are defending isn't absolutist because it recognises that claims to truth are relative to the seman-

34 We can also see the point by analogy with the two predicates 'is true' and 'is believed by God'. The second cannot replace the first because one needs to employ the first to even assert that p is believed by God. Suppose that someone were to reply to this point that ''p is believed by God' is true' just means that God believes that too. However, this move only looks plausible given that God is omniscient; in which case, the meta-claim 'God is omniscient' needs to be true. As we said, the concept 'is true' is inherent in the assertion itself: to assert that p is to affirm the truth of p. This is why it is indispensable, and this is why 'is true' cannot be replaced by a predicate about what some ideal group or being believes or would believe.

tics of the claims themselves. Descriptions of the world and of ourselves are only as good as the employed concepts, which are historically and socially formed. Furthermore, the realism that we are defending isn't wedded to a correspondence theory of truth. It needn't claim that truth consists in linguistic representations matching the way the world is. The realism that we urge doesn't need to be charged with absolutist and representationalist baggage. We needn't think of cognitive mental states as representations of reality and of a reality that is as it is absolutely.

It is not enough to show what is wrong with the pragmatist position. We also need to illuminate how the arguments in favour of it are misconceived. As pointed out earlier, a pragmatist approach to 'truth' seems plausible given that the only alternative is absolutist and Platonic. According to this argument, it is implausible to think that true sentences describe the world as it is absolutely, independently of our interests and concepts. After all, those concepts are historical and contingent. Given this, says the argument, we need a human-scale definition of truth in the pragmatist style.

This reasoning hinges on the assumption that there are only two alternatives: an absolutist or a pragmatist conception. The flaw of this only-two alternatives assumption is revealed with an analogy: from one viewpoint, X is to the right of Y; from another, it isn't. This analogy requires us to separate two distinctions: subjective vs objective and relative vs absolute. The assertion that X is to the right of Y is an objective truth claim even though it is relational or relative. Even if the statement is objectively true, it is not absolute because it is a relational claim. The point of calling it 'objective' is simply that it is true or false independently of what anyone thinks about its truth or falsity. It isn't a matter of opinion because thinking doesn't make it so. This means that one can make mistakes and be ignorant about what this assertion says. Later, we shall return to this point and suggest that this is why we need epistemological virtues: to help overcome our fallibility.

We find a pragmatist argument along the lines sketched in the later writings of the renowned thinker Hilary Putnam (1981) in which he implicitly assumes that there are only two options: an absolutist definition of truth in a Platonic style or else a pragmatic one. However, contrary to Putnam, the fact that we need an objective account of truth doesn't require that we are wedded to an absolutist one. One can reject absolutism without abandoning objectivity. We are not forced into thinking that Pragmatism is true because Plato is mistaken.

The assertions that we make are bound to be relational or relative. At the most elemental level, they are bound to be relational to the socially constituted meanings that comprise our language (which isn't to say that meanings cannot change). Therefore, we cannot think of our most well-tested scientific theories as informing us about how reality is *absolutely*. Such a thought ignores the semantic aspect of our theories. However, relative to those socially constructed meanings, assertions

will be objectively true or false. Our most well-tested scientific theories do inform us about how reality is in relation to the concepts which form the semantics of those theories. Their being objectively true or false isn't reducible to claims about how we might come to know them. In this regard, truth and falsity are one thing and semantic meaning is another.

The same applies to sentences that are outside the ambit of the natural sciences. This is because, with *any* assertion or declarative sentence, if it is true then it is so independently of what anyone believes or wants with respect to its truth. Likewise, if it is false. We can call this feature of assertions 'objectivity', so long as we bear in mind that it is also a feature of sentences about people's psychological states, which sometimes are called 'subjective'. In other words, if a psychological sentence about what someone wants or believes is a true sentence then it is so independently of what anyone believes and wants with respect to its truth. Claims about the subjective can be true objectively.

Let us put the more general point in a different way. The history of philosophy is strewn with the false dichotomy between absolutism versus subjectivism. For example, Plato was an absolutist about truth and in contrast, the Sophists were subjectivist, holding roughly that there is only opinion (Thomson, 2016; 2022). But we can see that this is an inadequate opposition. The opposite of absolute is relative, and the opposite of subjective is objective: we have two pairs of distinctions and not one. Therefore, we have the possibility of truths that aren't absolute, but which are objective. They aren't absolute because they are relational to social meanings and they are objective in the minimal sense that they are true (or false) independently of what people believe about their truth or falsity. In short, the arguments for sophisticated subjectivism in the style of pragmatism that hinge on rejecting some kind of absolute conception of truth fall foul of this false dichotomy.

Why are these arguments important for consensus-building and participatory democracy? The arguments indicate why we need a realist notion of truth, as a counter-movement to the epistemological pragmatism implicitly inherent in much of the 20th century political theory. It requires the idea that communities can progress in their understanding of themselves and the issues they face. This idea requires a robust conception of truth according to which it is not only possible to make mistakes or have false beliefs, but also possible to be ignorant. Even when everyone agrees, even when everyone is being internally rational, we can still be oblivious of important truths, and we can still be mistaken. We can still be seeing things in a wrong way or missing crucial patterns or concepts. A community can reach consensus with regard to a proposal, and they can be mistaken about it. The whole community can be in error. Consensus is not definitional and is not a condition of truth. In technical terms, we need an externalist account of epistemo-

logical rationality and this means that we need a realist and objective conception of truth and falsity.

The arguments reveal that the political importance of consensus for participatory democracy doesn't depend on the incoherent idea that truth itself is built out of consensus. The notion of consensus has a long and checkered history in political thought in part because it has played a definitional function in relation to concepts such as being true and rational. According to our argument, this mistaken role has sullied the understanding of the political importance of consensus. The fact that political participatory practices aim at consensus doesn't mean that the concept of consensus has the kind of definitional function accorded to it by pragmatism. Because of this, our main thesis about consensus shouldn't be associated with this aspect of the thought proposed by the authors mentioned. Not only is their definition of consensus different from the one we proposed here, but the theoretical role of the concept is too entirely different. Put simply, in the views of Rorty, Habermas and Rawls, an ideal hypothetical consensus is the only way to define either what is just or rational or true. On the contrary, our account of participatory democracy requires the assertion that truth and rationality cannot be defined in terms of consensus.

Once liberated from these functions, the idea of consensus can be a goal of actual participatory processes in which what people believe is diverse. In democratic political processes, people try to come to consensus without it being the case that consensus is a condition of or a sign of truth and without it being the case that consensus is a necessary means or a necessary expression of rationality.

Consensus and Pluralism

It is a common view that the demand for consensus is inconsistent with pluralism. Pluralism is a conjunction of several theses. First, it is roughly the view that any two persons will have divergent beliefs without this being the case that one of them is believing irrationally. Two people with opposite beliefs can both be rational (Rescher, 1993, 8). This is possible because they have access to differing bodies of evidence, and they may be employing different concepts. Second, pluralism is of the view that it is a social good that individuals have divergent beliefs. This apparently contradicts the claim that consensus is a social good. Thirdly, pluralism holds that political and social institutions should be constructed with the idea that people are bound to have diverging beliefs rather than on the assumption that they will or should agree.

These three pluralistic theses appear to be plausible, and they do seem to entail the claim that consensus is not a social good. According to this, democratic in-

stitutions and processes should not be designed around consensus. However, against these claims, the simple point is that pluralism is inconsistent with consensus *only* assuming the definition of consensus as unanimity. But, as we have already indicated, this is an inadequate definition of consensus. Consensus isn't that everyone agrees on the truth of a proposition or set of propositions. It is a set of social relations that enable a community to act as a community despite such disagreements.

This implies that we can hold that pluralism and consensus are both social goods, and they aren't incompatible. Consensus is what allows a community with a divergence of beliefs to act in harmony as a community. Or, put in another way, consensus-building is a way to construct unity given a plurality of beliefs, and which respects each believer as a person. Consensus doesn't require the negation of pluralism.

However, it is true that successful consensus-building processes do not leave people's beliefs intact, as they were. When people from a community come together to discuss issues of concern, they will share their experiences and understanding, and when these discussions are well facilitated, this process can change everyone's comprehension and feeling. Discussions will probably change people's minds about the issues at hand because, at least, they will understand better why others see things differently from the way that they do. They might begin to see that there is something to, or some truth in, the other views. Usually, this means that people will tend to become more nuanced and less dogmatic in their beliefs, and more sympathetic and less antagonistic in the way they think about the views of others. This doesn't mean that they will agree. It might indicate a greater willingness to find common ground. In this way, consensus-building seeks to transcend pluralism without negating it. It seeks to build the unity of a community within this plurality. Consensus building is a process of learning.

Consensus-building processes don't try to eradicate pluralism. They do not try to attain, let alone impose, unanimity. The very *raison d'être* of such processes is that everyone's voice counts equally, and such processes are designed to respect the views of all members of the community equally. Therefore, they are the diametric opposite of imposition. Furthermore, such processes don't try to eradicate pluralism of belief. They try to build on such a diversity of views in order to construct new and hopefully better understanding. Consensus-building processes are spaces for people to learn from each other. In this way, the first two theses of pluralism are compatible with consensus-building. Consensus-building processes try to find enough common ground and mutual understanding, such that a community can move forward with regard to a specific issue. It tries to build a common understanding of what should be done, given a wide variety of beliefs in a community.

Pluralism is not necessarily valuable in itself. Epistemological plurality has an important expressive value: it is a sign and a symptom that a society is non-repressive, and that people from different backgrounds understand important issues differently. We would be worried about a society in which nearly everyone shared the same beliefs on major issues. We would suspect that such a society was doctrinaire or subject to thought-control, such as through excessive propaganda. We would be concerned that such a society was disrespectful of cultural differences. In this sense, pluralism is a symptom of a healthy society.

However, note that pluralism can also be a sign of an unhealthy society. For instance, when a majority suffer poverty and deprivation that the wealthy have never experienced, this will result in deeply divergent beliefs. Likewise, when minorities suffer from systematic oppression and discrimination, this can result in experiences that the majority do not easily understand, and hence a divergence of beliefs. Such pluralism is a sign of an unhealthy and unjust society. In a society that was more just and in which people were more sympathetic and open to each other, some of these divergences of understanding would be lesser. Nevertheless, it remains true that, even in conditions of inequality, a lack of pluralism can indicate an unhealthy society, one in which thought-control has been successful.

Pluralism also has an important instrumental value. In a society marred by inequality, pluralism is necessary for the struggles that try to overcome injustice. Otherwise, the *status quo* would be accepted, and society would not improve. Additionally, insofar as people have different understandings, this makes a society culturally rich, and this diversity is invaluable for arriving at new ideas, and deeper and more inclusive interpretations. A society without disagreement is one that cannot progress epistemologically (Gadamer, 1979). It is a huge impediment to other forms of improvement. However, in this regard, pluralism *per se* is not a social good on its own. It is instrumentally good that people have divergent views, but only when they also have opportunities to share their views and to listen to others. Pluralism locked behind closed doors would not be instrumentally good in this way. Gated pluralism is sterile. This implies that pluralism is socially instrumentally valuable only in relation to processes of dialogue or in relation to our learning from each other. It can serve an important set of purposes, but only under conditions in which people listen to each other.

The mere fact that people disagree doesn't have other value in itself, apart from pluralism's important expressive and instrumental value. The conditions that make pluralism possible (such as freedom of the press) might be valuable in themselves, and some of the possible consequences of pluralism might be valuable in themselves, such as cultural progress through the encounter of difference. However, the conditions and consequences of pluralism do not mean that it is good in itself that the members of a community have a variety of beliefs.

Although the two are compatible, pluralism and consensus are social goods in quite different ways. As we have seen, pluralism has important expressive and instrumental value. In comparison, consensus allows a community to decide and act as a community. In this sense, quite apart from being expressively and instrumentally valuable, consensus also has a constitutive value. It is partly comprised of a set of social relations and, as such, it is a necessary element of a political community. It is part of what allows us to speak of a community as such, rather than merely as a group of individuals who happen to agree on some issues and who are willing to make compromises on others. With consensus, a group has the capacity to make decisions and take action as a community.

In sharp contrast, pluralism as a value is individualistic. With regard to its general expressive value, pluralism is a good in a society insofar as individuals have the autonomy to believe as they see fit without being pressurised by some authority to conform to a creed. It means that individual autonomy is respected: there is no imposition. In this way, the expressive value of pluralism depends on an individualistic conception of autonomy.

This is why pluralism is associated politically with the need for tolerance. According to pluralism, a society needs tolerance rather than consensus. This implies that each person will tolerate other people having beliefs that they think are importantly false. Even if I think that a person is radically and importantly mistaken in their beliefs, I will tolerate this difference. In this sense, 'tolerate' means to put up with and to not try to coerce or impose. This can amount to indifference. Tolerance doesn't require that one should try to comprehend the views of the other. It doesn't suggest that one engage with the views of others, to learn from them. In this way, pluralism and toleration are values that define a relationship between autonomous individuals. The relationship is defined minimally as: "Let us leave each other alone except when it is for mutual benefit." Such a relationship presupposes individualism.

There are many different kinds of individualism. Nevertheless, the general idea of individualism is that people are individuals whose self-interest is self-contained. It holds that persons are social atoms, and we are always separate from one another. This means that all relations between them are contractual, and thus transactional. From this, there follows another kind of individualism which claims that all statements about institutions can be reduced to statements about the behaviour of individuals. These two are related because the first requires the second. More on this in Chapter 4.

Unlike pluralism, consensus is a community defining value in several ways. It is the result of the actions of a community, rather than that of a collection of individuals. Indeed, it is a community that undertakes a consensus-building process which enables the community to arrive ultimately at a state of consensus. There-

fore, the state of consensus itself cannot be understood as an aggregation of individuals who happen to have the same beliefs. It also implies that consensus-building processes cannot be conceived as the construction of a deal or contract between these atomistic individuals. In this sense, consensus doesn't presuppose individualism, whereas pluralism does. Consensus is a community defining value also insofar as it strengthens a community. Consensus-building processes are aimed at improving the relationships that compose the community.

What is the relevant difference between these individualistic and community-based conceptions? Why does it matter? Insofar as it presupposes individualism, pluralism paints an erroneous picture of social relationships and institutions. It portrays them as transactions between self-contained autonomous units. Given this portrayal, tolerance is a negative: the willingness to not interfere with the beliefs of others. In comparison, insofar as consensus is conceived as community-defining, it rejects individualism. This means that people are not regarded as atomic individuals: others are part of our lives; we belong in communities; and institutions aren't contractual arrangements between individuals. Because individualism's portrayal is mistaken, because others are part of our lives, and because our lives are lived in communities and institutions, tolerance isn't enough. We need to work together to understand better *as a community.* Leaving each other alone (even within limits) excludes this. Negative tolerance excludes the positive search for shared understanding, and individualistic tolerance bars the search by communities for greater understanding.

None of this means that tolerance isn't good. It means that, as a value, it is limited by the atomistic conception of human life that underlies it. Like negative peace, like the injunction to do no harm, it does not go far enough. It doesn't recognise the non-instrumental good as a positive beyond the idea of avoiding the negative. Beyond tolerance, there are several synergies of mutual understanding, which constitute communities, and which we explore in the next chapter.

Beyond Agonism

Agonism affirms that pluralism is necessary for the ongoing dissent of oppressed minorities. According to agonism, such dissent is a needed force because existing power relations need to be continuously overcome (Lafont, 2019, 69). Agonism is a permanent struggle against the *status quo* that disadvantages minorities. Therefore, the idea that a society should aim for political consensus is mistaken: it disfavours the powerless and disadvantaged, and favours an unjust status quo.

We have already articulated some objections to such a view. One additional reply to agonism is that the oppressed really do want consensus, namely concern-

ing the full recognition of their rights (ibid. 63). This objection to agonism can be taken further because it recognises that pluralism isn't valuable in itself. In terms of social justice, its value is instrumental. Thus, the argument that the oppressed need to *continually* strive for their voice to be heard is reasonable only within a political-economic system that systematically oppresses groups of people. This means that agonism assumes the current political-economic structure. In contrast, our aim is to characterise a political framework that transcends the instrumentalisations implicit in such an unjust system. As discussed throughout this book, whilst radical reforms are needed to improve the existing system, it is the system itself that must be transformed. Humanity needs some idea of what such a non-instrumentalising political system might look like.

The reforms typically urged by agonism are like bandages to ease the effects of wounding, but which don't diminish the wounding itself. *Within* a political system that systematically instrumentalises people, perhaps the only remedy for the oppressed groups is to enshrine their interests as legal rights and, as agonism advocates, this requires struggle. However, such remedies don't constitute the transformation of the system. The system remains one that systematically instrumentalises, even if minority groups gain legal immunity from specific forms of instrumentalisation by acquiring the relevant rights. Although such reforms are good and urgently needed, it remains the case that the political system is constructed so as to instrumentalise people by maintaining a distinction between the ruler and the ruled. Even in a representative democracy, the system works in such a way that the wealthy can exercise power over everyone else. Hence, we need a system that doesn't instrumentalise. Participatory democracy is essential to any such a system (even if it is not sufficient). In short, in a political-economic system that doesn't instrumentalise, agonism wouldn't be necessary, even if it is an essential part of the route to such a non-instrumentalising system.

As an objection to our project, agonistic now becomes equivalent to the realist claim that we shouldn't even be trying to conceive politics in the proposed idealised manner. The newly formulated objection holds that agonism represents a realistic depiction of the struggles necessary for the people who live in societies that oppress, and that any non-realist characterizations, such as the proposals of this work, are irredeemably flawed.

In reply to this contention, we recall the argument of the first chapter which concludes that political science is inescapably committed to normative or evaluative claims about what is better. Any empirical description of political institutions will need to employ the idea of reasons for action, of what people conceive as valuable. Such claims presuppose that there are true claims about what is valuable, and in turn, this entails that people matter non-derivatively. Given this, it is a mistake to instrumentalise ourselves and each other. Political discourse should be

committed to this kind of value ontology, and given this ontology, it makes sense to inquire about its political and economic implications, which is precisely the project at hand. We need to examine what is implicit politically in such commitments, and, as Chapter 1 shows, the result of such an examination is that such value claims entail a political system quite different from those we typically denominate as 'democratic'. The need is accentuated because, although there are many critiques of existing political structures, these critiques tend to suggest reforms, and seldom propose re-envisaging the system as a whole.

Through this kind of reasoning, we can conclude that agonism is too closely wedded to political realism, ironically. It is ironic because the existing system systematically favours the rich and disfavours minority groups. By being tied to the realist idea that the political is necessarily a dirty power game within this existing system, agonism limits the struggle of the powerless to fighting agonistically for rights *within* that unjust system. It implicitly assumes that all struggle must be restricted to changing the *status quo* within an instrumentalising and unjust system. Because of this, agonism also accepts the antagonistic *status quo* in which there are minorities and majorities, and winners and losers. In this way, agonism is polite antagonism. That is, it assumes that the social relations constituting a society are necessarily confined to conflicts of interest; and that the oppressed can only have their voices heard and their needs met by non-deliberative processes such as those of protest and compromise.

Consensus in Participatory Democracy

How should we define consensus? Even 'define' is a tricky word. On the one hand, the question shouldn't be taken to require that there is a unique Platonic essence that definitions must match. On the other hand, the idea that we are free to define the term as we wish, without constraint, ignores the fact that the word has meanings with roots in its present and historical usage. Rather than providing a crystalised definition, we need to show how the concept of consensus functions.

The claim that consensus is simply unanimity of belief is clearly inadequate. It certainly isn't a necessary condition for consensus because we can imagine a community that attains consensus without unanimity. This would occur when people who disagree with a proposal feel that their objections should not override the community approval of the proposal. Consensus can be attained without unanimous agreement when a part of the community feel that, although they cannot support the proposal on the table, they do not need to oppose it. They agree *to* the proposal, even if they don't agree *with* it, and we move on.

This feeling of being willing to stand aside so that the community can move forward needs to be reasonable. For instance, to count as consensus, it cannot be coerced. If people feel that their understanding of the issues has been well listened to and incorporated in the revised versions of the proposal, and if they feel that their views have been well understood and that they will be respected, then their willingness to accept the proposal might well be reasonable. For it to be so, these feelings must reflect reality. In such a case, despite the fact that there is no unanimity, the community does have consensus. Those who disagree might decide that, for the moment, further discussion is not required and would not be productive. If their views have been heard with openness and without prejudgment by the community as a whole, and if the current proposal reflects this, albeit not as much as they would want, then their consent would be reasonable. In this case, we have consensus. Note that, in such a case, one might wish to say that although they don't agree (in terms of beliefs), the community does agree (in terms of acceptance). We need to separate *agreeing with* from *agreeing to.*

Reaching consensus with respect to agreement has different degrees, including: (1) I fully accept this decision. (2) I can accept this decision on certain grounds. (3) I do not fully accept the decision, but I can live with it. (4) I do not accept the decision, but given the community's interest, I am willing to forgo rejecting it.

These reflections show why unanimity of belief also isn't sufficient for consensus. If a group of people happen to share the belief that P, this doesn't imply that they have consensus. One can have unanimity without consensus. Consensus implies a communal sense, a common understanding, and people can happen to have overlapping beliefs without having a shared sensitivity regarding some common concern. In this way, having a common sense is one aspect of being a community. When the community has a common or shared perception of what the issues are, they may attain consensus, even when agreement regarding a specific belief hasn't been reached. In short, because the term 'consensuses' has built into it the idea of a common sensitivity or perception of a community, mere unanimity of belief isn't sufficient for consensus. In this manner, consensus is a property of a community. In contrast, unanimity is a property of a group of individuals. The two are fundamentally distinct.

In summary, unanimity of belief isn't necessary or sufficient for consensus. However, this doesn't mean it is irrelevant! It means that consensus is a more complex notion. Propositional agreement will not be necessary as long as those who disagree with the proposition in question are willing to accept that the community act in a certain way, and as long as this willingness is subject to certain conditions regarding the quality of the process involved. Propositional agreement is therefore insufficient because without the propositional agreement being a result of the appropriate community processes, it doesn't amount to consensus. Furthermore, as

we shall see in the next chapter, propositional agreement usually isn't a simple dichotomy between two alternatives: either you believe that P or you don't. This means that there is often more room for manoeuvre in the understandings between parties regarding what is important and what to do.

Consensus-Building Processes

To define consensus, we need to specify what appropriate consensus-building processes are, and how they fit into the community's being (or not) in a state of consensus. We will provide a more complete account over the next chapters. Nevertheless, we can offer a rough and provisional account now as follows: consensus-building is a set of processes whereby a community can make decisions about its future and perform actions without these decisions and actions being an imposition on any person or group of persons by the whole.

This definition has several features.

First, consensus involves the engagement of the community. To achieve consensus, an entire community would be invited into a public space to explore issues that matter for the community, such as the community's common good.

Second, consensus consists in the decisions and actions of the community. The people who are its members come together to decide what the community should do. In this way, consensus building transcends the individualism inherent in forms of pluralism based on notions of tolerance between individuals.

Third, consensus building is, in part, the forming and strengthening of a community. Through such a process, the community becomes more organised and thereby acquires more power, or more capacity, in a Spinozian and non-antagonistic sense of the term. Usually, the term 'power', refers to the idea of getting others to do what one wants against their will. This employment of the term is associated with a Hobbesian social ontology, which is both individualistic and antagonistic. It is a question of me or us having power over them. In contrast, for Spinoza, the power of an entity is its capacity to perform actions *as that entity.* This depends on the internal organisation of the entity in question. The idea is that a well-organised community will have more power, not because it can impose its will on other communities but rather because, as a community, it has the capacities to do more.

Fourth, consensus building requires that the community's decision must be without imposition. This clause of the definition would be violated if there were persons in the community who have been, and feel that they have been, coerced and pressurised into going along with some proposal. If people acquiescence to a decision in such ways such that this isn't an imposition, then their agreeing would be the result of an appropriate collective process of consensus-building in

which all are equal and treated as such. Above all, those who acquiesce are, and feel they are, equal members of the community. In this manner, consensus without unanimity presupposes social relations of respect, trust and goodwill within the community.

Finally, even when a community attains consensus, this does not mean that the decision taken is rational, and it doesn't mean that the propositions affirmed by the community are true. We do not suppose that properly run consensus-building processes will *necessarily* lead to decisions that are rational, reflective of relevant truths and good for the well-being of the community. For this reason, the main argument for participatory democracy outlined in the previous chapter is not based on the supposed benefits of such a system. Rather, it was based on the claim that only such a system treats people non-instrumentally, as people of equal value.It wasn't based on an instrumental cost-benefit analysis. The main argument for such a political system cannot be based on such considerations. It doesn't seek expediencies by instrumentalising people, and instead, it treats everyone as the king because that is what the sovereignty of the people means.

Nevertheless, this doesn't mean that a participatory system wouldn't have important benefits. For example, one would expect such a system to be associated with people being more peaceful, more friendly and more epistemologically virtuous. However, the main good of such a system is not well described as a benefit because the term 'benefit' is usually associated with the accruing of instrumental means or something useful such as extra dollars in the bank account. The main good of such a system is that it allows people to live in real communities. This isn't a benefit; it is a transformation.

Consensus-building is fundamentally a certain kind of decision-making process of a community. This process is different from other forms in that a decision is reached only when no member of the community dissents from a statement of the decision. This indicates the significance of consensus: it stands for the social and relational conditions under which people can act as a community. This kind of analysis accords well with the etymology of the term, and it means that consensus is necessarily peaceful.

Respect, Trust and Good Will

Consensus-building processes have several preconditions which include respect, trust and goodwill. For the community to engage in consensus-building process, people will need to recognise and respect the fact that the community is comprised of people with very different beliefs and concerns. To explore common concerns and shared interests and to arrive at a collective decision, it is essential that every-

one in the community is willing to engage in the consensus-building process. In order for the willingness of people to acquiesce to be rational, the community would have to be trusting and trustworthy. For example, I might disagree with you, but I might still trust you to represent my views fairly in a meeting that I cannot attend. This trust can be warranted without it requiring you to suppress your own views. In such a case, for you to report on our disagreement in a way that is fair requires you to be able to adopt an impartial view in your reporting. When I trust you to respect my beliefs, I trust you to recognise that you and I are equals with respect to having a voice, even when you think that my beliefs are mistaken.

In general, trust is a difficult notion (Dyck & Lascher, 2019, 137; O'Neill 2002b). We can trust the snake to bite us and the traitor to betray us. Clearly, trust is more than having reliable beliefs and inductively sound predictions. In the context of consensus-building, trust has to be understood as part of the willingness of people to act as a community. The idea is that the community can act as a whole only when there is relevant trust. This means that the people who comprise the community have to trust that the other members of the community will respect them and hence their views sufficiently. For example, suppose I am ill and I miss the session that decides how we will vote as a community in the regional assembly. My colleagues who disagree with me on critical points don't take advantage of my absence to push through their view. Instead, they advocate that the decision should be postponed until I can be present in person because they feel inadequate to represent well my views. If I feel that my colleagues would do this, then I trust them. Suppose now they decide that they can adequately represent my views and because of this, they don't advocate postponement and the decision in regional meeting goes against the view that I hold. I trust their decision means that I sense that I have not been instrumentalised in this context. In conditions of trust, counterfactuals of these two types would be true.

We have just seen that good consensus-building involves demanding preconditions, such as. respect, trust and good will. For this reason, it also has infrastructural and institutional needs. For instance, it requires public spaces and supporting dialogue processes. Well-structured and well-held public spaces that are open and inclusive are imperative for inviting the engagement of the whole community. Well-designed and well-facilitated supporting dialogues will be essential for the community to encounter each other as persons, to heal the past wounds, to build social relations, and to explore beliefs. Both communal spaces and supporting dialogue processes are part of consensus-building, and they hinge on respect, trust and good will of the community.

The Need for Consensus

Could we have a participatory democracy that doesn't require consensus? It might seem so because, at the end of a participatory session, the assembly could vote on a set of propositions, and the majority vote (or, for example, a 75% majority) would be sufficient to pass the proposal. Furthermore, this kind of voting arrangement might seem to be a way to combine participatory institutions and practices with some form of majority rule, which is more practical than consensus.

To counter this suggestion, we need to establish that anything less than consensus, such as majority rule, constitutes a violation of the principles of good democracy governance established in the previous chapter. The main argument for this conclusion hinges on the claim that voting on a proposal will inevitably instrumentalise those who vote against the proposal because their voice is *ipso facto* excluded from the political process after the voting.

This argument may seem to be simply a variant of the idea of the tyranny of the majority, a phenomenon that plagues many contemporary forms of democracy. For example, in an important plebiscite, the majority wins by a 1% margin and gleefully goes ahead and implements the winning proposal safely ignoring the concerns of the substantial minority whose voice now no longer counts. Another example: in a representative system, the vote difference to control the parliament or congress may be a sliver of 1%. Indeed, party A might win a crucial seat in Congress by only 500 votes and yet lose a number of other seats to party B by a number of votes that well exceeds 500. Such points are important as limitations of the existing system. However, the main argument we present is more than the idea that the majority rules over the minority. Let us separate the various issues.

First, as the main argument indicates, majority rule with voting instrumentalises the political voice of minorities, and in this way, it violates the principle of equality argued for in the previous chapter. If everyone's voice is equal then all should be part of the process of building an agreed proposal or decision. Under this principle, the majority cannot say to the minority: "your views don't count simply because there are fewer of you" or 'your views don't count because we already voted them out." Instead, everyone is equally part of the community and their voice counts. Public policies cannot be decided in premade packages and everyone needs to be able to contribute to their formulation. Minorities will have insights and ideas that capture some truths important for the consensus of the community and which will transform the understanding of the community.

Second, with a system of votes, all power becomes focused on the act of voting, and this concentration instrumentalises the process. We discussed this phenomenon in the previous chapter, in relation to the voting for representatives, as before and after. *Before:* once there is a voting system, the processes prior to the act of

voting will tend to be treated as having only instrumental value in relation to whether the proposal is passed or not, or whether sufficient votes can be garnered to secure the majority. This implies that the process of listening, sharing and discussing becomes solely a means to the vote.[35] Viewed as strictly instrumentally valuable, where the value is only in the result, the process itself is seen as fair game for further manipulation. When the process is regarded as having no value in itself, there is no need to respect and care for that process. Only the results matter. Therefore, to achieve the result, what has been instrumentalised once is apt to be instrumentalised twice, and so on. *After:* once the die is cast and a proposal has won, this is effectively a license to ignore the views of the minority who lost. After all, once the decision is taken, the views or understandings of those who lost are no longer relevant except insofar as they might influence other decisions or votes to be taken in the future.

Third, once built into the system in these ways, the instrumentalisation of the minority will inevitably escalate. For example, the proponents of a proposal will calculate that they only need, say one or two more votes, to win the required majority. Then they will work out how to influence the votes of the people who are most swayable. In short, what people believe becomes food or fodder for obtaining the desired result. Hence, we have seen targeted advertising and propaganda, and twisting of the truth and erosion of respect for truth as such.

Fourth, the majority lose the opportunity to absorb the views of the minorities into their own thinking and understanding. There is a more abstract way to put this: a majority vote system instrumentalises the political voice of the majority. It may be harder to see this, but majority views become like creeds or dogma that tend to be swallowed whole. In this sense, the voting system treats the majority more like sheep than persons. When the whole field of political engagement has been reduced to who wins, the majority inevitably tend to become treated by the system as mere instruments to winning. It doesn't matter what they think and understand so long as they vote in the desired way. Perhaps, a better way to put this point is that the community loses the opportunity to absorb a wider plurality of understanding into its consensus.

Fifth, the process of voting divides a community into majorities and minorities, which is inevitably antagonistic and polarising. It also carries in its wake the idea of winning and losing. Therefore, the activity of voting is contrary to the construction and renewal of the community as such. It splinters the communi-

35 This isn't exactly right because there is a four-fold distinction between means and ends on the one side and instrumentally and non-instrumentally valuable on the other.

ty into individuals who gather into groups for the purpose of forming temporary alliances. This is part and parcel of the instrumentalisation.

Lottocracy

Some writers claim that the best governance system is one in which randomly selected individuals undergo a process of deliberation with respect to a specific policy and in which their decisions define the policy for society as a whole. This proposal seems to combine the best of both worlds: the decision-makers are representative of the population as a whole in a way that elected politicians would not be, and as a small diverse group working with the aid and advice of experts, they have a much better chance of reaching epistemologically good decisions than a participatory democracy that involves the whole community.

Note that the proposal is that the decisions of these randomly selected representative groups should count as the governance decision for the society as a whole. This is quite different from the claim that such random groups could be employed to inform the decisions of a community or that the community might delegate deliberation to them given a set of provisos. Note also that the proposal under discussion isn't that a system with such randomly selected representative groups would be better than the current representative system. The question is: Would such a system be better than what we are proposing, namely a full participatory democracy?

The resounding answer should be 'no' because the key issue is that the political non-instrumentalisation of persons requires their participation in the decisions of the community as equals. Anything else would count as an instrumentalisation because it would either ignore or coerce people's voices and thereby not treat everyone as equal persons.

This implies that everyone should participate in the development of the community as a whole. Eventually, this will mean that the community becomes wise enough to know when, and under what conditions, it can delegate deliberation to smaller groups and that the community has built enough trust to know when those recommendations can be readily accepted without suspicion. Nevertheless, we seek a system in which the power of one set of people over another is substituted by the Spinozian power of the community as a whole, its capacity to act together and do more.

The lottocracy proposal fails this condition. It doesn't respect all people equally because with such a system, people are *forced* to accept the counterfactual: "If I had been part of this mini-republic group then I would have agreed with their de-

cisions."[36] We can see this by imagining a super-computer that takes as part of its input the views of the people concerned as well as the facts concerning the issues. We can assume that the supercomputer would calculate an optimum policy-decision based on these inputs. Systematically handing over one's political power and that of the community to such a god-like computer is equivalent to abdicating one's personhood in this respect. To affirm as a permanent irreversible policy, "I will go along with whatever you say without examining your reasons" is a form of self-instrumentalisation because it involves negating or contradicting one's nature as a person and treating oneself as a plank of wood. In this regard, it is the equivalent to renouncing one's power to a ruling class. Lottocracy is benevolent autocracy in disguise.

In this way, the arguments against a lottocratic system reflect those against voting. Lottocracy instrumentalises consensus-seeking so that it becomes only an information-processing mechanism in which the sole determinant is how to arrive efficiently to a specified outcome (in this case, a fair or representative solution to set of policy questions).

Under such a system, the political would occur *outside* of the deliberations of the mini-republics. On the one hand, while the majority would remain apathetic and unengaged, highly motivated minorities would try to find ways to influence the deliberative process (for instance, by skewing public opinion) without engaging as equals with those who would disagree with them. Because lottocracy involves randomly selecting people who would reflect existing public opinion, such a proposal doesn't address how groups would instrumentalise other people in order to influence the balance and diversity of public opinion. Likewise, the same would apply concerning the inputs of a hypothetical super-computer. On the other hand, by the same token, if majority public opinion is starved of discussion with minority voices, then it will remain prejudiced. Thereby, it will remain instrumentalising of the people it doesn't listen to. In short, in a participatory democracy, public opinion cannot consist in what it is currently: the result of a set of polls of what people think in their isolated or separate boxes, without their being part of a process of consensus-building in which people listen to each other and discuss to find a common understanding. Minority groups may have understood aspects of the relevant policy better than the majority. Minority groups may have misunderstood the deeper concerns of the majority. And *vice versa.* Without

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36 Fishkin claims that the policies of mini-republics are recommendable because they provide the conclusions that the people would have arrived at if they had been better informed. See Fishkin, J. (1991). *Democracy and Deliberation: New Directions for Democratic Reform*, New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press.

processes of consensus building, there can be no common understanding and collective decision-making.

Finally, we return to a core point. In this context, the division between the majorities and minorities assumes a political economic system that consistently does not treat all persons as equal. It also assumes antagonism. In contrast, in a participatory system, the community tries to find a common voice, because of and through its diversity of beliefs. It transcends the divisions between the majorities and minorities.

Dissent

So far, we have considered the thesis that the majority shouldn't overrule minority voices by imposition. A vote would amount to this instrumentalisation. The majority should respect the views of the minority, and the process of discussion and deliberation has to reflect that respect. If, in all honesty, the minority feel that there is more to discuss, that the majority haven't heard well their understanding on certain critical points, then the majority shouldn't be able to impose on the minority. A tradition of consensus requires this.

Now, we face the opposite problem: the minority might hold the majority to ransom. The concern is that an ideologically motivated and stubborn minority might sabotage the democratic process by unreasonably insisting that their views overrule those of the majority. This is a potential *practical* problem facing consensus-building processes. It needs to be dealt with as such. But it might be contended that this problem forms the basis of a counter-argument against the claim that community decision processes should be governed by consensus. This is the apparently crushing objection that any stubborn minority or individual might highjack or subvert the democratic process by simply refusing to grant consensus. Consensus fails because it gives to anyone the power to veto. Furthermore, a group could use this veto power to ensure concessions on other points.

One problem with this objection is that, so-stated, it accepts and adopts the ideas of an instrumentalised majority voting system. It sees the impasse as a situation in which the majority agree and a minority *veto* this agreement. A genuine participatory system wouldn't view the situation in this way. Rather it would view the situation as one in which there are still deeply unresolved issues from which the community can learn. Of course, this optic assumes the preconditions of respect, trust and good-will. If these are lacking, then this is the problem. Consequently, the solution is to strengthen the processes necessary for activating these presuppositions.

Another problem with this objection is that it assumes that the partakers in a local participatory system are subject to the same political leadership conditions as they are under a representative system. This is implied by the term 'dissent'. As we already mentioned, in a representative governance system, especially in capitalistic economic conditions, people will necessarily tend to believe that they need to be led. Or else, they will tend to be rebels. In other words, under the conditions of representative democracy, we need leaders, and this means that anyone who disagrees with the proposals of a leader (who isn't a follower of another leader or potential leader lying in wait) is *ipso facto* cast as a rebel, a dissenter, a mutineer. In current party political system, disagreement tends to involve such cultural implications. Those who refuse consensus are painted with this brush. In contrast, in a participatory democracy, they wouldn't. If all people are politically equal (as a social expression of their being equally non-instrumentally valuable), then there are no leaders who tell us what to do. And, therefore, a person who disagrees with a proposal isn't a dissenter in this sense.

It might be argued that a reformulated version of the original objection would survive these problems. After it has been carefully recast, it would still stand. Let us assume this is so, so that we can jump forward. The reply to the objection has several strands.

First, we have argued that consensus-building processes have preconditions such as respect, trust, and good will. Although these conditions are still vague, nevertheless the point of calling them 'preconditions' is to emphasise that one cannot have a consensus-building process without them. Because community participative decision-making should be consensus-building, this means that, when these preconditions are lacking, the community need to institute remedies to make sure that there is no such shortfall. These remedies will include systematic dialogues, as described in Chapter 3.

Second, the people who participate in the consensus-building have to be able and willing to comply with these preconditions. This doesn't mean that they must comply to the will of the majority (for that would take us right back to the beginning)! The community cannot exclude people participating because of their views; this is central to the very idea of consensus. Nevertheless, there will need to be some restrictions pertaining to who participates in the general process of community decision-making. These are related to residency, age, mental health and some types of crime. These are thorny issues that we won't discuss this in this work.

However, the general point needs to be stated with care. For example, children should have a voice about the nature of education; the imprisoned should have a voice about the criminal system; the mentally ill should have a voice about the institutions of care, all in ways that they often don't now. The community can estab-

lish special consultative sessions to ensure that this happens. Nevertheless, this doesn't imply that all visitors, children, incarcerated and mentally ill people should be participants in the consensus-building process of the community. Likewise, similar points will also relate to the preconditions. People who are genuinely unable and/or unwilling to comply with the preconditions shouldn't automatically participate in consensus building processes. It would not be rational if people who are not able and/or willing to comply with the preconditions of consensus-building were able to subvert the process. So this requires certain minimal conditions.

Third, of course, there will always be people who are obstreperous, who are upset and who are convinced that everyone else is mistaken to the extent that, even after discussions, they won't reach some understanding about common ground. However, there are many ways to deal with such difficulties that don't involve excluding or silencing people, and which do treat all as equals. For example, special smaller discussion sessions can be established. Much depends on the role of the facilitator of consensus building assembly meetings, and this will be the topic of the chapter after next.

Fourth, except for one general case that we will come to later, it is irrational for someone to subvert consensus-building processes. It would be contradictory for someone who complies with the preconditions to undermine them. Or to restate this: insofar as a person complies with the preconditions, she would have respect, trust and goodwill, and to this extent, she will not subvert such processes. Furthermore, insofar as they are rational, participants who comply with these conditions will realise that it is in their interest that the participatory system doesn't break down because whatever might replace it would be worse from their point of view and from that of the community.

Fifth, we started with a problem: how can we design consensus-building processes that overcome the challenge of the persistently stubborn? Later chapters will be dedicated to trying to answer this challenge. On its own, this problem doesn't amount to an objection or counter-argument to the claim that participatory democracy should be consensus based. The argument would need to be supplemented with an additional premise. This extra premise isn't immediately obvious. The mere fact that there are problems isn't enough, but the idea that there aren't sufficient adequate solutions to the problem might serve as an adequate additional premise. However, such a premise depends on the assumption that there are cases in which there aren't adequate solutions, and on the meaning in this context of 'adequate'. In Chapter 4, we will reframe this general point in a way that opens up avenues to various solutions.

Chapter 3
Community Understanding

In the previous chapter we established that consensus is a social good. It consists in the community being able to act as such and act as a community in which people are not ignored or coerced, which are two main forms of instrumentalization discussed earlier. As a community, people can engage and participate in processes in-which there is no marginalisation nor coercion. In this way, consensus is the backbone of any democratic form of governance. Democracy has to be participatory, and to be participatory in a way that accords with the equal non-instrumental value of all people, it must be consensus-seeking rather than based on voting.

From this point in the analysis, the road forward forks.

On the first track, we need to bring closure to what is unfinished: the arguments given so far don't show that consensus is practically rational. So far, our arguments only show the conditional claim that governance should be in the form of a participatory democracy *if* it can be made to work. Against the required condition, it might be objected that consensus is too difficult, too time-consuming, too demanding of participants' good will, and too costly to be treated as possible for all intents and purposes. To respond to this objection, we need a sustained argument to demonstrate how there can be practical remedies to all the major forms of disagreement that might occur in the construction of consensus. This task is ongoing. Once the themes of this chapter have been explored, we will be in a better position to properly address another major objection, namely that consensus is impossible because of radical or irresolvable disagreements (Ransbotham (2013); Mouffe (1999).

On the second trail, we can further the argument that consensus as agreement is not enough. We need to describe how a group of people can become a community and reach *good* decisions. This means that both the relations between the persons matter and the content about which there is consensus matters. In both ways, mere agreement is insufficient. Not only do we need to characterise what it is for a community to act harmoniously, but also what it means to reach better decisions in terms of the content. This requires more than seeking agreement in the midst of disagreement, or avoiding disagreement. Instead, it entails improvement: epistemological and hermeneutical progress on two fronts: strengthening the community as such, and deepening the community's engagement with the content, or the issues it faces. As we shall see, this gives rise to two different sets of virtues.

The understanding of the content needs to be based on the holistic conception of well-being, as well as the principles of equality, peace and non-instrumentalization, presented in the first chapter. The content of the policies has to reflect these

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principles. This is not the appropriate place for an extended examination of how these four principles might be formative of policy. The pertinent point here is that the community can fail to make good decisions. There could be progress both in terms of process and understanding of content, but neither is assured.

The externalist epistemological view and realist conception of truth argued for in the previous chapter are both required for this progress in content to be even possible. They are necessary for the idea that the community can both make errors and be ignorant (McWilliams, 2021). There is no guarantee that a participatory democracy will make good decisions, and the argument for such a system doesn't depend on the idea that it will.

This chapter is divided into two main parts. The first argues for an epistemology of peacefulness, one which replaces the search for less disagreement with the need for greater community understanding. The second part shows why dialogues are needed for the required kinds of understanding.

An Epistemology of Peacefulness

Although we need the two concepts 'error' and 'ignorance', they are insufficient to characterize a community's progress concerning content. These two concepts keep our descriptions at the level of knowledge. To describe community consensus-building well, we need the idea of understanding. A major theme of the current chapter is that consensus-building is not adequately portrayed simply in terms of avoiding belief-disagreement. We need the idea of misunderstanding and, more positively, that of building community understanding. We need an epistemology for communities that provides a conceptual framework for the needed kind of improvement of understanding. This, we will argue, constitutes an epistemology of peacefulness.

Disagreement Underdetermined

We have already seen that consensus isn't merely agreement of belief. Even if unanimity isn't necessary or sufficient for consensus, nevertheless, agreement of belief will be a core element of consensus. This means that finding belief-agreement will be a central part of consensus-building process. However, this idea is subject to misconceptions and limitations, and we will show why we need to overcome them.

It is tempting to think of consensus-building mainly in terms of reducing belief-disagreement. According to this conception, a community will attempt to construct agreement about a given proposition through a set of compromises. In this

view, the proposal or proposition for a decision has the centre stage, and consequently, the discussion or deliberation is defined in terms of agreement or disagreement with this proposition (or its amendments). We shall challenge this conception. This argument will form a reason for affirming that understanding is a better and a more peaceful epistemological concept for our purposes rather than knowledge. When appropriate, we should substitute 'understanding' for 'agreement', and 'misunderstanding' for 'disagreement'.

Let's first examine the nature of belief-disagreement. The discussion is going to be slightly technical. Belief-disagreement might be defined in terms of two or more persons having contradictory beliefs: two people disagree if and only if person A affirms the proposition P and person B denies P.[37] Both cannot be right. Indeed, to affirm that P is to assert that the relevant sentence is true, and it is also to deny not-P. Beliefs are defined by a propositional content. For two people to disagree, they have to disagree about the *same* proposition.

It is easy to take the word 'same' here as a given, as requiring an atomic and self-contained view of propositions, as if each were a static target, like an object. However, this would be a mistake: the meaning of a word isn't a thing. We are systematically prone to think of meanings and propositions as entities, on analogy with physical objects, but this is an error which overlooks the aspectual or intentional, and relational nature of semantic meaning.

The intentional: The meaning of a sentence is an intentional (with a 't') phenomenon because the sentence is about something. (e.g. I hope for, I think of …) The intentionality of language is reflected linguistically in the fact that the verb 'to mean that' is intensional or aspectual. Intensionality (with an 's') is a semantic feature. To assert that the verb 'means that' is intensional indicates that meaning is description-relative or aspectual.[38] For example, 'H_2O' doesn't mean the same as 'water', even though the words refer to the same substance. One refers to the substance through the concepts of the periodic table, and the other refers to the same substance through concepts related to its place on Earth and its daily use. Same reference; different meaning (Thomson 2003b, p.79).

The relational: The meaning of a word consists in its semantic relations to other words. The term 'chair' is opposed to 'stool' and 'table' within the category 'furniture'. We can conceive the meaning of a word as a set of relations that specifies what a word *means*, where 'means that' is an intensional verb, similar to 'believe that', 'know that', or 'think that'.

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37 The sentence 'A believes that p' doesn't contradict 'B believes that not p'. The contradiction concerns the content of their beliefs.

38 On the difference between intentionality and intensional sentences, see G. Thomson (2002) Chapters 7 and 8.

These points also apply to believing. Beliefs aren't mental items, which we either have or do not have and which comprise the 'furniture' of the mind. Such analogies with physical objects fly in the face of the aspectual nature of mental states. This means that what we believe, the propositional content, depends on how it is described. Believing is aspectual. Lois Lane believes that Superman can fly, and although Clarke Kent is Superman, she believes that Clarke Kent cannot fly. What she believes depends on how it is described. Consequently, belief-agreement and disagreement are also intentional. For example, John believes that Bacon wrote Hamlet, and Mary believes that Marlow wrote Hamlet. They disagree, but they do agree that Shakespeare didn't write Hamlet (Rescher, 1993, 44–5). Whether there is agreement or not depends on how the content of the relevant beliefs are described. Furthermore, believing is relational: any belief depends on others (Quine and Ullian, *1978*). For instance, even when two people both believe that P, there will be relevant background beliefs about which they might disagree. When a young person and an experienced physicist both affirm that $E=mc^2$, their agreement disguises differences in belief that would be important in some contexts (Stich, 1985).

Clearly, this highlights that a purely logical approach to belief is too simplistic. The sameness requirement is not a simple on/off or yes/no condition because propositions are not discrete units. Owing to their aspectual and relational nature, what counts as the *same* proposition is indeterminate, and varies contextually. Consider two theists: in one context, they count as believing the same concerning the existence of God. In another context, their belief might not count as the same, even when the words used mask the differences. When he defined God as the principle of truth rather than as a person, was Gandhi being an atheist? The answer isn't clear-cut because of the word 'God'. We shouldn't regard the indeterminate nature of word-meaning as some form of vagueness, as if it might be cured with a strong dosage of definitions. Word-meanings are ineluctably indeterminate, albeit within limits.

Let's now consider the implications of the above for consensus-building. Belief-disagreement is underdetermined because of the very nature of believing. This uncovers an error in the 'either for-or-against' paradigm often dominant in current politics. As mentioned, we tend to think of debate in terms of being *for* or *against* a certain proposition, and consensus-building would therefore consist in constructing amendments. This is a misconception. Instead one might advocate a more person-centred approach to consensus in which people try to find common or shared understanding of the issues. This alternative approach doesn't mean they won't disagree! It means that, to better characterise the cognitive side of consensus-building, we need to frame the discussion in terms of the more holistic con-

cepts of understanding and misunderstanding. We discuss some of the implications of this in the Appendix.

Disagreement as Conflictual

The concept of disagreement seems wedded to the oppositional and conflictual nature of the epistemological differences between people. It suggests that there are two sides, and that one of these has to concede. The following is built into the nature of logical contradiction itself: 'p' and 'not-p' cannot both be true, and therefore one must be false. This implies that if person A believes that p and person B believes that not-p, at least one must be mistaken. This means *ipso facto* that A will think that B is in error and *vice versa.* That 'person A and person B disagree' necessarily carries these implications. This doesn't mean that two people cannot disagree amicably. Of course, it also doesn't exclude the possibility that they think that they disagree, when they don't. However, it does mean that they do think of each other: 'You are mistaken.'

The concept of disagreement requires such logical contradiction. However, this doesn't mean that logical contradiction should be our primary model for what is going on in public disagreements, even if it is an essential ingredient. The concept of misunderstanding provides a more insightful model than the 'I am right and you are wrong' approach suggested by bare logical contradiction.

First, the concept of misunderstanding allows the idea that, in a conflict, both sides can be right, albeit in different ways. In such a case, person A has something truthful to say about the issue at hand, and so does person B. Both A and B have misunderstood the issue in that they have not recognised the truth in the contribution of the other. In this way, the notion of misunderstanding suggests that there is a more comprehensive understanding that encompasses both sides of the conflict, and that latches onto the important truths about the issue. (In such a case, the beliefs of person A and person B are not contradictory after all).

Second, the concept of misunderstanding contains the idea that a conflict isn't simply two sides disagreeing about the truth of a proposition. There is also the misunderstanding of each other. If we take logical contradiction as the primary model for what is going on in public disagreements, we tend to ignore such misunderstandings. In these situations, the only thing that matters is: Who is right?, which also means 'Who is wrong?'. In contrast, the claim that there is misunderstanding (rather than simply disagreement) suggests that person A and person B might understand each other's views better, without necessarily endorsing or rejecting them. None of this denies that people still disagree with each other! Neither does it imply that all disagreement is antagonistic.

These two ideas are very important for consensus-building and dialogue. They define spaces for progress and greater understanding. This implies that even if person A and person B disagree about some proposition, there remains a logical space for finding other relevant propositions about which they can agree. It also means that person A and person B can understand why they might disagree in ways that remove the antagonism. They simply won't dismiss the other's views as foolish or ridiculous. This transforms the meanings of disagreement from potentially antagonistic and even aggressive discord to accepting different perspectives without scorn and with the possibility of better mutual understanding.

In short, disagreement as logical contradiction contains the idea that one side is mistaken, and it suggests that one side should back down as a loser, even if this happens in ways that save face. In contrast, the concept of misunderstanding contains within it at least two spaces of possible harmonious accord. These constitute two ideals that we can strive for. First, in contrast to disagreement, the notion of misunderstanding doesn't force us into 'right' and 'wrong', and doesn't rule out the idea that all sides have a contribution to make. It suggests that there is a common understanding that can embrace these various sides: a synergetic fusion. Second, it also implies that there is a possibility of reaching a shared comprehension that encompasses mutual understanding of the various proposed views: person A understands the position of person B and *vice versa.* In this context, the word 'understands' doesn't mean that the two parties know of each other precisely what to disagree with in preparation for an antagonistic debate! Rather it means something like: "given your history and background, I can see that you are bound to see things in the way you do." With such mutual understanding, two people may not agree with each other's views, but they can collaborate on constructing a common proposal.

To emphasise, these two ideals are shared understanding and mutual understanding. Both require work and willingness. These two ideals transform antagonism to epistemological collaboration.

In summary, in characterising consensus-building, understanding is a better concept than believing and knowing. Together, the two ideals mean that the traditional view of consensus-building needs to be supplanted. According to the traditional view, it is all about agreement with propositions. According to this view, one might think about consensus-building as follows: "Take a proposition P. Given this, some people will agree with P; some will disagree; and others will be unsure. Now let the debate begin!" This conception is misleading because it views propositions as predefined units, and beliefs as arrows that may or may not strike those targets. It implicitly conceives of believing and propositions as analogous to objects. It treats beliefs as solid and consensus as stolid. In sharp contrast, believing is aspectual and relational. This means that people tend to see things in one way from one

angle, and in a very different way from another angle. Whether these two ways are contradictory may well be ineluctably indeterminate. Consensus-building processes have to take the indeterminate nature of believing into account, and more than that, they have to organise themselves around it, work with it as a strength rather than as an apparent disadvantage.

In the vision we propose, it is the community that has the centre stage, not the propositions. According to this view, *inter alia*, consensus-building is more about community members learning from each other in order to discover the relevant propositions about which its members can agree, and through which they can develop common understanding of key issues. The fact that a community needs to foster shared understanding regarding issues means that the relevant problem space isn't already fixed. It can be reshaped. As paradoxical as it may sound, consensus is sometimes more of a question of divergent rather than convergent thinking. While this doesn't exclude ironing out and eliminating factual misinformation and unsound reasoning, it does preclude the idea that consensus-building is primarily about finding agreement regarding a predetermined set of propositions. In our conception, consensus necessarily occurs within a shifting pluralistic sea. Human experience is bound to be diverse, and so will be the understandings and misunderstandings that arise from it. Consensus-building processes are based on this diversity; they enable learning based on it.

Collective Epistemological Virtues

Community decision-making cannot simply consist in propositional agreement based on a static lowest common-denominator, even with social relations thrown in for good measures, as if they were simply an extra ingredient or an added seasoning. What we call 'consensus-building' has to include the efforts of a whole community to attain better understanding *together.* At its heart, it must encompass the idea of the epistemological progress of a community as a whole. In this, we immediately face the limitations of the term 'epistemological' and the unclarity of the word 'progress'.

Traditional epistemology tends to focus on the justification of conditions for scientific knowledge-claims made by individuals. It addresses the question: What kind of justification or warrant does a person need to be able to assert that they know that P, when P is some scientific proposition about the world? This approach excludes a lot that is relevant to our aim of explaining the epistemological and hermeneutic progress of a community.

To amplify this, we will challenge, in three steps, the relevant limitations in the traditional approach, and explain the idea of collective virtue epistemology.

In the first step, we contrast knowing with understanding, and show why the later is a significantly more appropriate concept. In the second, we introduce the importance of the semantic, or meaning. With the third step, we will transcend the individualism inherent in the traditional approach by defining an epistemology apposite for community consensus-building.

Step One

We will contrast knowing and understanding, to show the limitations of the first for the task at hand, and why the second fares better. The job at hand is to describe the heart of the epistemological and hermeneutical progress of the community in its decision-making processes. The idea of understanding is better suited to this function than knowing. However, the required contrast between knowing and understanding needs to be drawn with some care. We will not examine the differences between the specific forms 'A knows that p' and 'A understands that p' except briefly. In making the contrast, we will include in 'knowing' only propositional knowledge, and not knowing how or practical knowledge. Our task isn't to provide an epistemological theory of understanding. And, to simplify, we will assume that if A understands X then this requires that she has some relevant knowledge of X. Given all this, the question becomes 'what does the concept of understanding bring to the table that the concept of knowing on its own lacks?'

When it refers to propositional knowing-that, the term 'knowing' isn't appropriate for our aims for various reasons. First, knowing is atomistic in the sense that knowledge is proposition by proposition. A person can know lots of isolated facts about a domain such as the health of plants without knowing the relevant principles and explanations that connect and organise those facts. 'She knows a great deal about X' doesn't entail that she understands X well; knowing a lot about something is consistent with simply being able to recite a long list of apparently unrelated facts. In short, the term 'know' doesn't contain the idea that what is known is relevantly important, while the term 'understand' does. 'Relevantly important' indicates that, to count as understanding, the person must know the organising or explanatory principles that unify, explain or bring sense to a domain or field. Knowledge can be random and disjointed; understanding can't (Zagzebski, 2001, 2019; Kvanvig, 2003; Hannon, 2021).

It might be objected that if a person knows the relevant explanations then the knowledge in question wouldn't be atomistic or disjointed. But this objection misses the point. The point is that the term 'knowing' doesn't contain this idea, while 'understanding' does. Someone might insist that our contrast is badly drawn because a person can know the relevant unifying principles, and in this case, understanding is simply knowing (e. g. Grimm, Baumberger, and Ammon, 2017). The reply

to this objection brings us to the second point. A person might know (or have propositional knowledge of) the relevant principles, but without being able to apply them to the cases at hand. In this instance, we would not say that the person understands the field or topic. This shows that 'knowing that' isn't sufficient for characterising understanding of even scientific theories. Understanding is more: one cannot understand a domain by simply knowing the relevant principles or theories, without being able to apply those well. The conclusion is that understanding requires the relevant knowing-*how.*

Third, the term 'knowing' does not carry the implication that the person is psychologically well connected to the domain or with the relevant facts, whereas understanding does. If Andrea understands that she is mortal, this suggests that she has absorbed and come to terms with this reality and its implications. Psychologically, understanding is holistically integrated. The claim 'Andrea *knows* that she is mortal' doesn't imply that she has absorbed her own mortality in a psychologically deep way. It simply indicates that she would assent to the relevant propositions. In contrast, the term 'understand' suggests that the person who understands well has this psychologically well integrated. Nehru was once asked: What was the secret of Gandhi's greatness? Nehru's response contained an important insight. He said: "Whereas you and I say one thing, think another, feel another, and do a fourth, what Gandhi thought, felt, said, and did were one and the same; they were of a piece." This indicates that, when we understand, we are integrated. It suggests that, when we don't understand what we know, we are fragmented. It is as if the knowledge has not really seeped into all parts of our psyche.

On these grounds, we propose the concept of understanding as the most appropriate for the task at hand, namely that of defining the epistemological progress that the community needs. The understanding the community needs is holistic. It is not just propositional knowledge about policy issues. It consists in part in having peaceful relations with the other members of the community based on mutual understanding, and being versed in the arts of forming recommendations, understanding what is important and knowing when to use experts. This suggests that the relevant forms of understanding are best characterized as the exercise of virtues.

A primary epistemological vice is the tendency to instrumentalise those who disagree with us about important claims. We do so by coercing or manipulating their views or by ignoring or dismissing them. The corresponding virtue is to be curious and open to the contribution of others in the construction of a consensus even if one disagrees with them. At the moment, people tend to seek out those who have similar views to their own and shun those who disagree. This is a recipe for cultivating misunderstanding and antagonism. The corresponding virtue, which can become part of the culture of community understanding, is, for instance, to

be attentive to those who have different views from one's own, and to have the humility to listen to other's perspectives.

Step Two

The idea of 'knowledge that' nudges us towards focusing on the required conditions of justification and, therefore, on issues pertaining to certainty and evidence. It edges us away from the semantic dimensions of epistemological and hermeneutic progress. By focusing on what a person *knows*, the tendency is to concentrate on the conditions for avoiding error or getting the facts right rather than those for gaining new understanding. Knowing implies certainty: the assertion that a person knows implies that they have a good evidential reason or sufficient warrant for their claim. Because of this feature of knowledge-claims, epistemology is overwhelmingly concerned with evidence or its relatives. This approach is perfectly reasonable and is required: when we affirm a proposition, the supposition is that there is good evidence for our claim. Inquiry usually *starts* at this juncture, e. g. seeking evidence for claims, and it is woeful when respect for truth in politics appears to be an unattainable ideal. Nevertheless, the *exclusive* focus on evidence to avoid error constitutes a severe limitation in several ways.

The primary emphasis on avoiding error is lop-sided. The epistemological virtues required for avoiding error pertain to being careful and cautious. They are opposed to those required for overcoming ignorance, which pertain to exploration and being open to new ideas. This indicates why we need a virtue epistemology based on gaining understanding.

Additionally, the traditional approach doesn't sufficiently recognize the importance of the semantic. The epistemic and the semantic are distinct: the epistemic concerns the nature of knowledge of and evidence for propositions, whereas the semantic concerns the meaning of those propositions.[39] Hence, epistemological progress doesn't simply consist in gathering evidence that enables us to rule out false beliefs. It above all consists in seeing new patterns through the formation of novel concepts or meanings. It requires new understandings. For example, Miranda Fricker (2007) shows how concepts of sexual harassment and discrimination have evolved in recent decades. This is a question of seeing new similarities and drawing new distinctions. It is semantic. Epistemological and hermeneutical progress requires this kind of conceptual innovation, examples of which abound in the natural and social sciences, as well as in common discourse.

More importantly, the traditional scientific approach usually doesn't acknowledge sufficiently the distinctive nature of the irreducible *semantic* factors regard-

39 More accurately, the meaning of the sentences that express those propositions.

ing beliefs about what other people think and want. To form beliefs about the psychological and character states of other people, we must interpret the relevant intentional content. How should we do this? How can I understand *better* what the other person wants or believes? These kinds of questions are not covered by theories of evidence in the natural sciences. Such questions are usually considered as part of hermeneutics rather than epistemology. This means that the discourse of evidence becomes replaced by that of interpretation, with the attendant implication that interpretation is a merely a matter of subjective opinion. In short, whereas 'understanding' includes the semantic, traditional knowledge-based epistemology takes the semantic for granted, as a given. We cannot make this assumption because progress may involve the employment of more appropriate concepts.

Of course, the community will definitely need knowledge in the traditional sense of the term. One needs to follow the evidence. In this regard, the community should have access to the knowledge of relevant experts. This very point itself illustrates the insufficiency of the concept of propositional knowledge-that for the task at hand. This is because one needs a certain kind of understanding or knowing-how to be able to employ wisely the knowledge of experts, and of course, to be able to identify the relevant expertise correctly.

Step Three

The traditional approach assumes that epistemological issues can always be adequately examined at the level of the individual. This excludes or relegates the relational. Accordingly, in traditional approaches, the belief-claims of other people are treated mainly as a source of evidence for first-person knowledge assertions. This is egocentric. It takes the individual as central locus: how can what others believe help *me* to know? Less blatantly: how can the beliefs of other people count as good testimony, especially in conditions of unequal power? How does the testimony of others contribute to the evidence I have for believing that P? Accordingly, it is as if each of us were a single juror assessing evidence for a 'Yes', 'No' or 'Not Proven' verdict about some proposition. In this way, questions about how we build up our understanding of other people, and how we form and develop our understanding of other people's views and desires, are often treated as peripheral. This sidelines the relational. The themes concerning our understanding of others and our relations with them are seldom given a distinctive treatment.

Furthermore, the individualistic approach also relegates the communal and the organisational. The idea of what a *community* knows as a whole or what *we* know as a group is usually not considered (see the Introduction in Schmid, Sirtes and Weber, 2013; Chapter 4 in Lackey, 2015). The concept of community epistemological progress is not usually on the radar. The idea is that a community *per se* can

understand (or fail to understand) a range of issues. It can make progress in this group endeavour; and this progress will consist in part in the community or the group itself having or exemplifying epistemic virtues (Lahroodi, 2007). This is an anti-individualist thesis, which we will expand later. This is an important thesis because it allows for the idea that the community has an epistemic culture, which will not be reducible to the epistemic attitudes of individuals.

Conclusions

Consensus-building processes transform disagreements to misunderstandings. They aim at greater understanding rather than mere agreement. Differences of understanding offer opportunities for learning rather than being just disagreement in belief. Consensus-building is more than just individuals reaching an agreement or a set of compromises. It consists in a community trying to reach greater common understanding.

Such synergy of understanding requires that, as part of a community, we can learn from each other how to better understand the issues the community faces. To that end, toleration simply doesn't go far enough; it keeps the groups who do not agree with each other separate, rather than fostering mutual understanding and learning. Tolerance itself does not engender nor enrich the community. This is one reason why the descriptions in this work move from disagreement to misunderstanding and from agreement to better understanding. Therefore, although tolerance is a presupposition of consensus-building processes, it is only one, and it is derivative. Willingness to listen is another.

However, such characterisations remain at the level of individuals having relationships with one another. From the point of view of the project, these are limited: we need to ascend from the relationships between individuals to the community as such. In order for a community to make epistemological progress, it needs to cultivate epistemic virtues as a community. For this, the people who form part of that community need to participate in the community processes which embody and nurture the relevant virtues. It requires that the community views consensus-building as a communal endeavour aimed at better understanding.

What kinds of understanding constitute the relevant community progress? The first kind is extra-community: the community needs to understand the social issues that it faces, and to see what decisions to take and why. It needs a comprehensive vision of its future that encompasses the views and interests of everyone concerned and, in light of this, the community can understand the social issues related to the decisions to reach and the actions to take as a community. The second kind is intra-community: members of the community need to understand each other bet-

ter. Such understanding is necessary but not sufficient for the community to be harmonious. This points to the need for dialogues to accompany consensus-building.

Deep Dialogue

The consensus-building of a community isn't just a question of finding agreement in the midst of disagreement; it is more a collaborative construction of better understanding. This has two facets: mutual understanding within the community and common understanding of the issues the community faces. We start with the first in order to show how deep dialogue is necessary for this.

Understanding others isn't simply an intellectual exercise; it is also experiential and emotional. It involves entering the world of another person and seeing things from their point of view. This is a big demand because it requires the willingness to relinquish the comfortable and parochial in oneself. Because of this, it is also liberating. People who live together in a community should have designated institutional spaces to understand each other better. These are spaces that enable us to overcome or transcend our inbuilt egoism or self-centredness. For this reason, people who live together in a community will develop a sense of how others perceive them. When I enter the world of another person, I have to be able to turn those eyes to myself: to see how they perceive me. This isn't like looking in a mirror! One has to be able to see oneself as the other person sees oneself, with their prejudices, or pre-judgement (Gadamer, 1969). This constitutes an extraordinarily powerful lesson, an opportunity to transcend the confinement of egocentrism, that no person should be deprived of, however painful it might be.[40] In order for a community to be a community, it needs to be harmonious, which requires that people understand each other. Hermeneutical exercise is needed for relational depth.

Although it might sound strange to say this, semantic meaning is frequently undervalued as a foundational aspect of the relationship between people. Following the empiricist tradition initiated by Locke, the linguistic is often conceived primarily as a tool of communication between individuals. This is not sufficient. Language is much more than a tool for communication; it is a world creator. Language fashions the experiential world that we live in because the experiential world we inhabit is created by the distinctions and discriminations that make experienced

40 This insight relies on the claim that such transcending is a part of one's well-being. cf. Thomson, Gill and Goodson (2020).

differences and similarities possible. These distinctions are conceptual. We each live in the world as shaped by concepts. This shaping is semantic. In this way, concepts or semantic meanings construct the experiential or phenomenological world that we inhabit. For example, without the concept of tree, one could not experience a tree as a tree. Without the concept of a friend, one could not experience another person as a friend.

Locke's empiricist and individualistic approach views language primarily as a transactional tool between already constituted individuals as atoms that make up the society. The empiricist approach also takes for granted the semantic institutions constituted by language. It simply assumes the linguistic character of our experience. In so doing, it misses what is most important: it ignores both the conceptual aspect of our lived experience *and* the social aspect of the conceptual. These two phrases contain a delightfully powerful insight. Because semantic meaning is largely shared, and because it is also constitutive of our experiential worlds, it has the extraordinary property of allowing us to enter the phenomenological world of others. One can step into the experiential world of a gardener, if they describe their experience in sufficiently vivid terms. One can briefly enter the phenomenological world of being in the trenches during a war given sufficiently rich descriptions. This is an remarkable facet of language: because language is public, and because all experience is conceptually or linguistically shaped, it enables the disclosure of the private. Because it is a world-creator, it is a world-sharer. It is as if language makes the private life public.[41] For example, in his novel *The Inheritors*, William Golding captures the experience of Neanderthals. After reading the novel, one feels that one has sensed what it was like to be a Neanderthal. Marcel Proust's descriptions of his childhood can transport one to the world of a child eagerly waiting for his mother to kiss him good night. The experience is almost visceral.

This extraordinary capacity of language means that, when we listen well, we can find ourselves glimpsing into the lived world of another person, and suddenly seeing things from their point of view. In short, the constitutive power of language allows us to understand others as if from the inside-out. It renders the phenomenological hermeneutical. Language partly constitutes all of our varied experiential worlds. Because language is a public phenomenon, it is the port of entry into the immense diversity of experiential worlds inhabited by other people. Be-

41 When we employ the word 'private' in this context, we don't mean essentially private. In his critique of empiricism and his private language argument, Wittgenstein uses the term 'private' pejoratively, as essentially private, to refer to Locke's thesis that all words can only refer to private sensations.

cause of this, the Lockean characterisation of language as a tool for communication as coordination is impoverished.

This way of viewing the semantic is very important for the issues at hand concerning consensus-building. So far, we have characterised consensus-building in terms of the community's making epistemological progress towards collective understanding. What we have said about the semantic means that we cannot conceive understanding merely as a transactional success, as a solution to a coordination problem, as the term 'agreement' suggests. Of course, often, it is that. However, at root, it is always *more.* And this *more* is very important for defining community epistemological progress. This is because the more the members of a community understand each other well, the more the community will be a unity that is able to reach better decisions. This implies that each person needs to understand better the experiential world of the other members of the community, especially those with whom they most disagree.

This indicates why consensus-building processes need to be supported by dialogue. It also highlights the power of well-facilitated dialogue to transform antagonistic disagreements into misunderstandings which can be transformed in turn into better mutual understanding.

Linguistic Communication

We have just seen that to understand others well, it is necessary to glimpse into their phenomenological worlds, which constitutes a powerful encounter and dialogue experience. As already argued, consensus-building presupposes respect, trust and good will and these prerequisites may be eroded when a community is in conflict. In such a case, the community will need dialogue to transform conflict and transcend enmity, in addition to the consensus-building process itself. Dialogues may strengthen the prerequisites of consensus-building and nurture the epistemic virtues that a community needs to progress in its capacity for better decision-making.

Such processes necessarily involve linguistic communication. This indicates that we need a typology of linguistic communication, which will enable us to classify the main types of misunderstanding that can occur between people. This will help analyse how dialogues may fail, and how the community can improve the dialogue processes towards better understanding. Such a typology could easily become very complicated and intricate. To avoid that, we shall propose a typology that is simple, yet principled. To do so, we shall divide communication into three aspects: (1) the linguistic as such; (2) the reciprocal speech and listening acts; and (3) the relationships constituted, *inter alia*, through the communication.

This three-fold classification is quite different from the traditional one which typically divides language into syntax, semantics and pragmatics. In the context of our project, our three-fold distinction makes more sense.

The Linguistic as Such

The linguistic as such can be divided into the syntactical, semantic and rhetorical. This is because the linguistic consists primarily in sentences that have a syntactical structure and a semantic meaning. But also the words out of which sentences are composed have rhetorical connotations through their semantic and cultural relations to other words.

Some sentences express a proposition. Sentences that don't express a proposition include commands, questions and exclamations. These are sentences that aren't true or false, such as 'Help!' and 'Are you OK?'. A proposition is the meaning of a declarative sentence or statement. Sentences that express a proposition make claims about the world, and in this regard, they refer to things in the world and they can be assessed as true or false. All sentences are composed of words in a syntactical structure. Given this, the meaning of a word consists in the way it contributes to the meaning of an indefinite number of sentences.[42]

However, the content of a word includes more than the strictly semantic relations with other words in the context of statements. It also includes the rhetorical. Writers sometimes treat the rhetorical merely as a pragmatic phenomenon rather than as also linguistic *per se.* As a pragmatic phenomenon, rhetoric is the attempt to convince an audience; it is the act and art of persuading. It is something we *do.* However, rhetoric is also a linguistic phenomenon, and as such, it is a feature of words, of their connotations and connections, of their metaphorical power, that goes beyond their strict semantic meaning. For example, the phrase 'illegal immigrant' is rhetorically different from 'undocumented immigrant' even though the two are close in meaning. Words have rhetorical and metaphorical power, which is public and shared. Its linguistic nature is shown by the fact that the difference between the meaning and the rhetorical and metaphorical tones of a word is one of degree and not one of kind. They fuse into one another. This linguistic power allows us to be swayed and moved by what people say (Stevenson, 1937). When we employ this linguistic power for such purposes, the rhetoric constitutes, as part of the speech-act, a pragmatic phenomenon.

42 This approach has its roots in the works of Frege (1984) and Donald Davidson (2001a).

The Pragmatic

Semantics concerns meaning; pragmatics is about how we use words. Pragmatics concerns speech and listening-acts. Some theorists regard semantics as primary: words must already have meaning in order for us to employ them to do things, such as making promises and issuing threats. Accordingly, pragmatics presupposes semantics (Levinson, 1983; Davidson, 2001b). In sharp contrast, some theorists regard pragmatics as primary: word-meaning or semantics is nothing beyond how we conventionally use words. Accordingly, semantics presupposes pragmatics (Grice, 1989; Wittgenstein, 1986). Other theorists try to combine these two kinds of dependency (Lewis, 1997; Gazdar, 1979).

Pragmatics is concerned with linguistic acts of communication. Both the speech-act and the listening-act have a three-fold structure. This is easier to see by considering the speech-act as an illustration. The first dimension concerns the act of speaking itself, performed in uttering sentences. For example, I can *ask* whether the door is open; I can *request* that it be opened; I can *assert* that it is open. In these cases, while the speech-act is distinct, the propositional content is the same (Searle, 1970). The act itself is also defined by conversational and contextual factors. Conversational factors presuppose that what one says is conversationally relevant. So if I assert, out of the blue, that the door is open, this might be intended and understood as an indirect request that the listener should leave. Conversational implicature permits us to understand each other without having to spell everything out (Grice, 1989). Contextual factors do the same. They allow for the spoken to imply the unspoken. In this way, both make communication swift but more precarious.

The second dimension concerns the causes and effects of the speech-act. The cause of the act is the intentions with which the communicative act was effected. In the action of communicating, the prime intention is the results of the action on the audience. Researchers in the field often divide those intentions into two kinds: the intention to get the listener or reader to *believe* something and the intention for the listener to *do* something. All speech-acts are manifestations or expressions of the mental states of the speaker. For example, most simply, if I assert that the day is hot then the assertion expresses my belief that it was so, given that I am being sincere. The fact that I am affirming it to you expresses some desire and intention on my part. It also reveals a host of beliefs on my part: that you understand English, that somehow this is relevant to you, and so forth. Moreover, in a conversation, I manifest much about myself, such as my mood and my character, without deliberately wanting to do so. These manifestations are interactive and are part of a largely unarticulated communication.

The third dimension of speech acts is the temporal context. Acts are not isolated events. They occur in a conversational history that has a future. Through

the act of speaking, one constructs a narrative or a text, which has a structure. Every speech-act is embedded in a broader conversational and relational context, with a temporal dimension. It might consist in an explanation, a story, a list, a piece of reasoning (Gadamer, 1989). The notion of a communicative speech-act is insufficient when it focuses on a single action. Speaking and listening usually occur within the flow of a conversation. The same applies to writing and reading and the flow of a written text.

To better comprehend the pragmatic aspects of mutual understanding, we can apply this three-fold structure of speech-acts to listening. In most pragmatic theories, listening usually takes second place to speaking, just as reading does to writing. Typically, pragmatic theories are first and foremost speech-act theories. Arguably, this is back to front. Generally, we speak so that we can be listened to; we write so that others can read. Even soliloquies and notes to oneself can be acts of communication in which the point of the uttering is in the reception.

Furthermore, the point of listening is to understand. Primary in listening is the understanding of the linguistic as such, especially the semantic. Secondary is the understanding of the pragmatic in its three dimensions, and of these three, the act itself is most fundamental: for instance. to understand, we need to know whether the speaker is making a statement or asking a question.

In sum, both listening and reading encompass the two sets of three elements just outlined. We hopefully understand in these six distinct ways, which also constitute different levels of potential misunderstanding. However, in the final analysis, the most important kind of understanding concerns the relations constituted through the communication.

The Relational

All communicative acts are embedded in an interactive process that forms and shapes social and personal relationships. The point isn't simply that, without communication, there would be no relationships. But rather, more strongly, the relationship is constituted in part by the process of communication. By definition, communicative processes constitute and change relationships.

For our purposes, the relational aspect of communication is very important. This is because, on the one hand, if the relations of trust and respect are strong, misunderstandings can be more readily corrected and easily overcome. Peaceful relations are essential to remove antagonism from such misunderstandings. This allows public discussions to be more enjoyable and educative. On the other hand, the various misunderstandings, which we have mapped in this chapter, are significant insofar as they result in antagonistic social relations, which can make consensus seem unobtainable.

This shows that dialogues are required for participatory democracy. They are necessary to attain the mutual understanding and subsequent peaceful social relations that make consensus possible. We shall argue that specifically deep dialogue is required, a term that we will explain.

Conclusions

The discussion indicates a classification of communicative misunderstandings through a three-fold typology: the linguistic as such; the speech- and listening-acts; and the relations thereby formed. We have identified at least three aspects of the linguistic: the syntactical, semantic and rhetorical. We have also specified three parallel features of speech and listening that are also potential sources of misunderstanding. We have shown how these lead to and constitute relational discord between people. This broad typology constitutes a simple classification of the various kinds of misunderstanding that make consensus-building seem difficult, which will guide us later in identifying the dialogue processes necessary for consensus-building.

Let's focus on the different kinds of misunderstanding.

Of the three general features of the linguistic as such, we can safely ignore the first, the syntactic, because most linguistic misunderstanding is semantic and rhetorical. It is semantic because although semantic meaning is a public phenomenon, nevertheless, people pick up on different aspects of the meaning of words. For instance, people draw distinctions differently. The rhetorical is part and parcel of the tremendous emotional force of language and, as such, it is an important source of misunderstanding between people. For example, two policies can be similar in content, but very different rhetorically, even when this difference isn't the result of a deliberate rhetorical act. In such a case, the resulting misunderstandings can be readily overcome by explicit clarification of the various rhetorical associations of the words involved.

Misunderstanding also typically concerns the pragmatic aspects of linguistic communication. In the light of the second dimension of the pragmatic, we can see that people misunderstand each other not only because of the content of *what* they say, but also because *how* it is said. We can understand well the semantic meaning of the sentences that a person utters, and yet misunderstand the implications of the way that they say it. On the basis of the way they say it, we form beliefs about what this utterance expresses about their beliefs, attitudes and intentions.[43] What they say and how they say it manifests something about who they are

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43 The phrase *inter alia* inserted here would indicate that we also rely on many other contextual cues such as gesture, body posture, facial expression, tone of voice etc.

and their character. In this aspect of the act of communication, one can come to comprehend the other person better rather than demonising the person.

This second dimension is a huge source of misunderstanding. One can read into the way someone says something, emotions and attitudes that one disagrees with. One can disagree with something that the other person is *expressing*, such as some implied attitude or some background beliefs. For instance, a person's narrative might be expressing bitterness and fear, and one might feel that such emotions or attitudes aren't appropriate in this context. In this way, listening with regard to the second dimension, as the interpretation of persons, forms an important source of discord.

With regard to this aspect, the speaker can reduce such misunderstandings through peaceful communication methods. The key to peaceful communication is to be aware of how the other might hear and take what one says (Rosenberg, 2015). By becoming more aware of how an audience is likely to interpret the speaker's attitudes, beliefs and intentions, a speaker can shift their verbal and non-verbal communication practice. This also shows that, although people misunderstand each other by listening inappropriately, this isn't simply a question of not paying attention, of being distracted and of adopting a prematurely prejudicial attitude to what someone is saying. It is also a question of ingrained hermeneutical practices that lead us to systematically misunderstand each other as persons, as we shall now see. We need peaceful listening.

Bad Hermeneutics

Many communicative misunderstandings don't concern propositional content or even the rhetorical force of the words. They aren't about the linguistic as such. They pertain rather to the pragmatic. In particular, they concern a mismatch between the speech- and the listening-acts. Without remedial dialogues, these pragmatic misunderstandings will contribute to and partly constitute antagonistic social relations.

There are several kinds of pragmatic mismatch between speaking and listening, According to our classification, these concern the three facets of the two acts: the nature of the act itself; its cause and effects; and its temporal embedding in an ongoing conversation or text. Of these, the second is perhaps the most important for our project because it directly affects the relationships between people. It concerns the ways in which people listen, read and understand each other. For instance, it consists in the mismatch between what one intends to communicate and what the other person interprets. Without dialogue, these types of discord contribute significantly to unpeaceful social relations. These forms of discord are am-

plified by mutual misinterpretation. For example, how the other person interprets one's intentions isn't how one thinks they should.

To define the kinds of misunderstanding that make consensus difficult, we characterised communication not only as a speech-act, but also as a listening-act. Indeed, it is listening (rather than speaking) that is plagued by a hermeneutic asymmetry. This is because there is a tendency, in our own case, to only see our own good intentions, and in the case of others, to see only the results of their actions, which are often bad (Gill & Thomson, 2019). One defines one's own actions by one's intentions, and one defines those of others by their effects. This means that there is a hermeneutical asymmetry, in virtue of which we are prone to apply a double standard: we judge ourselves by our intentions which are good, but we judge others by the results of their actions, which are usually imperfect. This means that we have a tendency to attribute maleficence and to even demonise others. This tendency is important for understanding all human relations (Thomson, 2017; 2020). This propensity for a double standard is accompanied by a set of allied dispositions, namely:

(1) We tend to assume that we understand others better than they understand us;
(2) We tend to underestimate the differences between ourselves and others;
(3) We tend to be ignorant of our ignorance of others.

Regarding the first propensity: egocentrism supports the belief that I can understand others better than they can understand me because I think that they don't have direct access to my mental states, but I can understand their intentions through their behaviour. This is the same double-standard mentioned earlier. Our attribution of bad intentions to the other person will be reinforced by the assumption that they didn't see my good intentions. In fact, we may even feel this failure on their part as a hostile act. Furthermore, we can imagine that the other person is engaging in the same reasoning concerning me. If I perceive this in their mannerisms, facial expressions, tones of voice and word choices, then this will further increase the antagonism. Likewise, they may perceive the same of me. The mutual misunderstandings escalate.

The second tendency above adds a new dimension to this process. I may see the quarrel between us in a certain way, and because I underestimate the differences between us, I tend to assume that the other person ought to be seeing it in the same way as I do. I take my perspective on the situation as the natural one. I assume that they would have the same view if it weren't for their ill-will. Therefore, their failure to agree with me is further evidence of such ill-will. The fact that they don't see it the same way as I do reinforces my idea that they have ill-will. Meanwhile, the other is undergoing the same process of attributing ill-will to me.

The third inclination is a very important factor in interpersonal relationships: our ignorance of our ignorance. The person who is ignorant tends to not know that they are so. If one doesn't know that P, then one will tend to not know that one does not know P. Indeed, to be aware of one's ignorance is a peculiar Socratic virtue. The escalating mutual antagonism described earlier is reinforced by the fact that both persons are ignorant of the viewpoint of the other. I may not even recognise my own ignorance of the other person's point of view. It may not have even occurred to me that I have missed out something of relevance and importance, namely how the other person sees our disagreement. Given this second-order ignorance, I tend to portray my view of the situation as the natural default position.

The original hermeneutical asymmetry that led to this cascade is erroneous. As Socrates saw, whenever someone wants something, they necessarily desire it under some description of the thing that reveals it as desirable. This doesn't mean that the thing wanted *is* all things considered desirable, but it does mean that the thing wanted is perceived as desirable under some description by the person who wants it. This is a requirement of the claim that a person's intentions always make sense to that person.

The point is that we can translate this first-person idea into a third-personal understanding because of the public nature of language (Wittgenstein, 1953). This public nature means that, for instance, when I say of you that you are hungry and when you say the same of yourself, and when you say that of me, the word 'hungry' has the same meaning. The public nature of language implies that there is some description of the person's intentions that makes sense to other people such that the others can see it from the first person's point of view. This means that there is necessarily a way of making sense of others' intentions. That is, there is a (truth-respecting) way of seeing what others want as a good.[44]

This thesis is only plausible if we distinguish between primary and derivative descriptions of a person's intentions. For example, my primary intention is to defend myself. It is directed to some good. The derivative intention is to hurt someone, which isn't directed to good. Revenge and malice as such should be regarded as derivative descriptions of the person's intentions.

The fact that all primary intentions must be for a certain good contradicts the egocentric tendency to see others' intentions as directed primarily towards something bad. The egocentric propensity makes it psychologically difficult for people to appreciate that there is always some description of any person's intentions that is directed to some good. We succumb to a childish illusion and tend to demonise oth-

44 This doesn't imply that all virtue is knowledge as Plato claimed. See Thomson (2016) Chapters 4 and 5.

ers. This illusion amounts to the incapacity to come to terms with the reality of others, a requirement that transcends the egocentric perspective.

Having peaceful relations requires that we overcome this hermeneutic asymmetry. In any conflict, there is some description of the intentions of my enemy as good, which I too could recognise as good. There is a reason to acknowledge this, without agreeing with the person's judgments. In principle, one could step into the shoes of even one's worst enemy by realising that their viewpoints make sense to them. To understand their intentions in this manner requires a willingness on my part to see the whole process that led up to the squabble or conflict from their point of view; and likewise, a willingness on my part to see my own actions from their viewpoint, however unpleasant that may be. This doesn't mean that I must agree with the other's judgments, only that I recognise emotionally there is some description of the situation as seen by the other that portrays their intentions as primarily aimed at some good and which I could see as good myself. This condition is a requisite for understanding others. It is also a condition of peacefulness in relations. In the next chapter, we will describe in more detail the dialogues necessary for attaining this peacefulness, and we will specify what is special about deep dialogue.

Current popular political narratives systematically violate peacefulness. Insofar as they are nourished by a desire to misunderstand others, they constitute a form of violence. The desire to *misunderstand* others is a requirement of antagonistic politics, and of the institutions and mentalities that support it. In effect, these are all forms of demonisation. By refusing to see the good that the other primarily intends, we attribute to them *primary* intentions that are bad. Under such conditions of demonisation, people will seek evidence to apparently support their bad hermeneutics. This means that they have an interest in exaggerating the differences between their own views and those of the people who disagree with them. This is also a form of demonisation: to exaggerate the views of the person one disagrees with in order to make one's own views seem more reasonable in order to make oneself feel justified and right.

These tendencies escalate into polarisation. In conditions of polarisation, A is against proposition p only or mainly because B is in favour of it, and B is against proposition q because A is in favour of it. In conditions of super-polarisation, people know that this is the case, and they consciously and intentionally use it to instrumentalise the other group. Polarisation and super-polarisation occur frequently within social conditions of ideology. Ideology instrumentalises people because it requires that we systematically apply instrumental rationality to the beliefs and actions of other people.

It is well known that what a person believes is a function of all sorts of factors, quite apart from evidence (Mason, 1993). Most of these other factors are non-ra-

tional. Some are also irrational. In an antagonist system, political beliefs are not regarded solely as claims to truth because they are often ideological. This implies that they are subject to political allegiances and enmities, which entail that they depend on the self-identifications that people make, and they will tend to reflect group experiences and biases. Furthermore, such beliefs will be defined in polarised oppositional terms: I believe that P as opposed to what *they* believe, namely Q. Because of this, people will tend to have exaggerated beliefs about the beliefs of the groups they oppose. To enable oneself to feel more justified in one's own beliefs, one will tend to distort the views of those one opposes. This tendency to exaggerate is fuel for negative emotions such as outrage, indignation and blame. It forms a basis for a one-sided interpretation that in its escalated form constitutes demonisation of the other.

Another aspect of the ideological nature of political beliefs is that they are about something else. Certain views become emblematic and symbolic, and they are firmly believed and fiercely defended because of this loyalty factor. This makes discussions about these issues rather like proxy wars. In a similar vein, such discussions tend to involve proxy trigger words, which also indicate loyalty to a set of views associated with an identity and with hatred of the views of the enemy group. In short, unpeaceful social relations generate forms of believing that would not be active in a society that was peaceful. In this chapter, we will describe a peaceful epistemology, an understanding of epistemology that embodies the principles of peacefulness articulated in Chapter 1. As we have already argued, this requires an epistemology based on community understanding.

Peaceful Relations and Community-Building

Dialogue for community consensus-building differs from conventional conceptions of dialogue, such as debate, discussion and conversation. As a process to transcend antagonism, dialogue is distinct from various forms of conflict resolution such as mediation, group problem-solving and conflict transformation. As we use the term, dialogue is a special kind of interchange or group interaction, which has the potential to transform people's feelings towards peaceful relations and community-building.

Methods for transcending antagonism consist in a range of activities with conflict settlement at one end, and conflict transformation at the other. There are four broad approaches for resolving seemingly intractable conflicts: negotiation, mediation, interactive problem-solving and conflict transformation, as well as various

kinds of dialogue.[45] Briefly, negotiation is a discussion between the parties with the goal of reaching an agreement. Mediation is a negotiation in which one or more outsiders or third parties assist the disputants in reaching the goal or an agreement. Included in mediation is arbitration or adjudication, which is when a third party makes a binding decision about the conflict (Carnevale, 1992). Problem-solving, especially reframing adversarial win–lose competition into a shared problem that can be solved through cooperation, usually combines so-called 'objective' and 'subjective' factors (See for example, Deutsch, 1973; Fisher, 1997). Conflict transformation looks beyond a conflict situation that appears to have an 'either-or' structure towards alternative structures, such as 'neither-nor' or 'and-and' (Galtung, 2004, 13). In conflict transformation, the two parties work towards "finding how their contradictions could be transcended and their perspectives combined in a higher unity" (ibid., 57). Here conflicts are conceived as complex webs of interactions that can only be transformed by 'the moral imagination' (Lederach, 2005).

However, as we employ the term, dialogue is different from all the above. In the context of enriching peaceful relations and community building, dialogue differs from negotiation, problem-solving and conflict transformation in part because dialogue is directed towards increasing understanding and trust between people by shifting their self-identifications. Hence we term it 'deep dialogue'. Deep dialogue is not necessarily aimed directly at providing a solution to a conflict, but rather at changing the cultures, misapprehensions and self-identifications that breed it. To understand better why deep dialogue has transformative power, we can explore its fundamental features.

In a deep dialogue, people come together in a special way. They become a group, suffused with friendliness and good will towards each other. There is a reduced sense of individualism. In this manner, such a dialogue is distinct from a conversation, which tends to be between individuals. Of course, the creation of this group togetherness is also a result of the deep dialogue itself. It cannot be forced or imposed, but it is nurtured in the dialogue process. Because of this, there will be a sense of common or collective action in which the members of the group participate together as a community as opposed to engaging in individual actions. Sometimes, this aspect of the process is referred to as co-creation of meaning. Sometimes, it is experienced as a co-inquiry, and sometimes as a co-sharing (Nicol, 2004).

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45 This section draws on Ramsbotham, (2010). Also see https://www.beyondintractability.org/moos/challenge-complexity

Conclusions: Beyond Political Beliefs

In this chapter, we have shown that consensus-building processes must shift from eliminating disagreements to transcending misunderstandings, and from seeking agreement to seeking better understanding. This follows from the nature of consensus. Consensus-building involves the community's learning as a community. In this way, differences in people's perspectives can provide opportunities for deepening understanding.

We argued that the matrix of disagreement/agreement should be replaced by one of misunderstanding/understanding in two dimensions: of each other and of the issues. We outlined deep dialogue as a central processes that enables this shift along the first dimension. Deep dialogue helps the community to reach a point where they can begin to engage with specific issues, towards the development of community consensus statements.

Typically, consensus statements are what a group of experts would come up with concerning a particular topic. This has been a standard practice especially in the domain of public health. However, a major issue that the community must address is the direction of its own progress. The issues often involve exploring normative questions such as "Where should the community want to be in 10 or 20 years?" Experts cannot answer such questions for the community. These normative questions require preparation, which consists primarily in strengthening the three preconditions of consensus-building we have just listed. Experts can help the community articulate its aims in wording that might be more readily translatable into policy. Experts can also support the community in identifying the means that might be needed. However, the aims and major directions must come from the community itself, albeit with preparation.

Those aims should accord with the principles elaborated in the first chapter, those of non-instrumentalisation, equal value, peacefulness and well-being. These principles already include environmental and ecological concerns because good relations with the natural world is an integral part of our well-being and because positive peacefulness includes peaceful relations with the environment, as explained in our other works. Of course, this doesn't mean that the community will actually follow those principles. *Inter alia*, these principles set the evaluative criteria in accordance with which one can define the epistemological progress of the community with regard to the content of its decisions. They also provide the criteria for defining the epistemological progress of the group towards virtue. Progress consists in a community making decisions that improve the well-being of all, in accord with non-instrumentalisation, equality of value and peacefulness.

Appendix: The Aspectual and Relational Nature of Believing

Earlier we argued that consensus building is more than finding agreement in the midst of disagreement. It also consists in constructing better understanding of each other and of the issues the community faces. The argument for this relied partly on the aspectual and relational nature of believing, which we ignore when we think of believing simply as endorsing an atomic proposition. We can appreciate better the importance of this mistaken view of belief by looking at its implications for the consensus-building process.

The first is nuance. In popular politics, we are either in favour of a proposition or against it, or else apathetically indifferent. Much contemporary popular political commentary is marked by scorn and outrage. Yet, typically, after a dialogue, after listening to others, after holding one's disdain and contempt in check, one can no longer see issues in this on/off manner. Nuanced views make public deliberation more difficult, but they reflect much better the nature of believing.

The second is specificity. The traditional conception of consensus-building assumes that specificity should be a goal of all processes. We are accustomed to the idea that specificity and precision are epistemological virtues. Whilst they are, this doesn't mean that they are overriding. There is such a thing as being *too* specific, especially in the context of consensus. This shouldn't be a surprise because, after all, we are accustomed to the idea that whether two things are similar or dissimilar depends on the level of generality that which they are described. In short, in deliberation, we should look to find the wording that captures the consensus of the community at the appropriate level of generality or specificity. Consider the story in which someone is asked to imagine a beautiful cottage in the woods. If afterwards, we asked them "What colour were the curtains in the bedroom?' or 'What kinds of cheese were in the pantry?' this level of specificity is inappropriate. Believing is always like that. So are agreement and disagreement. When two people agree, this is always at a certain level of specificity. Greater specificity might be inappropriate when it would destroy the sense of two people being in agreement, when it would undermine mutual understanding.

Community consensus is not like an ideal legal contract that leaves nothing to chance and judgment, and which covers all eventualities. The recorded consensus is bound to be lacking in many details because the ideal legal contract is a myth. For example, one might complain that a peace proposal is short on particularities. This may be a good critique, but vagueness can also be a strength of a peace proposal. A peace proposal may articulate well the common ground between two parties at the time precisely because it leaves certain particulars vague or undefined. In so doing, it might go as far as it can in articulating their mutual understanding and shared interests. The peace agreement conveys what the parties can agree to

as a first step. They can take this first step with the hope that the ongoing process will define the next steps with the required specificities in a way that is just and satisfactory to both parties. In other words, the existing peace agreement articulates what they can see as desirable now. After having taken that first step, the later vista yet to unfold will be different, and at that later time, the required second step will become clearer to both parties. We shouldn't expect that the optic needed for the second step will be apparent to them before having taken the first step. The premature demand for specifics expresses a lack of trust in the peace process. In affirming this, we are not claiming that the peace process will necessarily be a success and that trust will be vindicated! We are not claiming that as much clarity as possible is not a good thing. Rather, we are suggesting that too much specificity will destroy the peace agreement, and that we need the idea of trusting the ongoing dialogical processes given that what is visible from one temporal vantage point may not be from an earlier one. We discuss the implications of this further in the next chapter.

There is an objection to this line of thought: one might regard the lack of specificity as the attempt to cover up lurking disagreements: it is like a time-bomb that threatens to explode when exposed. It is a problem postponed. For instance, people might think that they agree when they don't, because they are using words differently. People might share a common rhetoric, when underlying this shared idiom, there lies a quagmire of disagreement on the specifics. From this point of view, we need to reduce unclarity before it blows up in our face, claims the objection. In reply, we should turn this way of thinking on its head! Vagueness itself is an ineluctable condition of agreement, even if clarity is a good. Therefore, we need to know how to employ vagueness appropriately in the construction of consensus, even while we strive for more precision.

The third implication concerns hidden conditions. Because of the relational nature of believing, a person may claim to believe that p, even when this belief is implicitly subject to unmentioned conditions and qualifications. In short, the person doesn't believe that p unconditionally, but rather something like: given q and r then p. Of course, q and r themselves would be subject to further conditions. These unspoken conditions mean that, in practice, logical contradiction is often difficult to pinpoint. This gives the search for greater understanding some leeway. Two people might agree to a conditional statement of the form 'given q, then p' even when they wouldn't agree to 'p' on its own. This shows us that consensus-building processes often need to be accompanied by interworld view dialogues. For instance, some policy disagreements track religious beliefs. However, discussions about such sensitive areas require other dialogues that help participants understand and trust each other better. In seeking greater understanding, one needs to take into account the degree of basicness of the beliefs in a disagreement. For

example, two people might agree on a basic policy position, but disagree on how it should be implemented in a particular circumstance. If we focused only on their derivative beliefs regarding implementation, we would miss their more basic underlying agreement. Or they might agree on the general idea of the equality of all persons, but disagree on how issues of desert modulate the application of the principle.

Fourth, we need to distinguish different kinds of propositional disagreement. Sometimes, people's disagreement is simply about impartial truth-claims, for instance, about what happened and what caused what, or what will the effects of a policy be. Often, it will concern conflicts of interest. Propositions that express the interests of a group are distinct from those that proport to state facts. This indicates that there are important differences between the processes of exploring truth and the weighing of competing interests, despite the intersections. The two are often muddled, and both are confused with general claims about what is valuable. For example, some people will think that environmental protection is more important than or should have priority over economic development.

In this regard, we need to distinguish between reasons and conclusive reason-statements. Two statements about distinct primary goods won't be contradictory because both will express non-conclusive reasons. For example, there is a reason to have dinner and there is a reason to abstain from the evening meal. Although these reasons conflict because we cannot do both, the two statements don't contradict each other: they can both be true. We can recognise both as true and, indeed, we need to recognise this to feel the conflict between the reasons. Once this conflict is recognised as such, we can look for ways to have the best of both worlds by making the conflict less specific. It isn't just about tonight's evening meal. It is about eating too much late at night and so on.

Fifth, the difference between the two kinds of reason statements is important for the framing of policy and laws. When one tries to encapsulate a policy position in terms of conclusive reasons, this requires that *all* the relevant exceptions need to be listed, for otherwise the statement would be false. This is why policy statements and laws couched as conclusive reason claims tend to be very complicated. They have to include all the exceptions. Indeed, substantive conclusive-reason statements are necessarily circumstance specific. They cannot be generalized without being made false. In contrast, non-conclusive claims describe what one has reason to do without the pretension that this reason cannot be overridden by other considerations depending on the circumstances.

One can fall into this wrong approach to consensus-building without even realising it. The approach of trying to frame policy in terms of conclusive reasons is mistaken in two ways. First, conclusive-reason claims only apply in particular circumstances. They cannot be true as general claims because they must include *all*

exceptions. They require a closed totality, which is an impossibility except in specific circumstances. Thus, to make the kind of evaluative generalisations that policy and legislative documents require, one has to use non-conclusive reason claims. Such claims tell us what is good, or what we have good reason to do, without the pretension that the reason in question won't be overridden in some circumstances. Therefore, such statements don't determine what should be done all things considered on any particular occasion. Second, when two people disagree about two contradictory conclusive reason claims, the agreement they have about the host of relevant non-conclusive reason claims is entirely hidden. Therefore, there is apparently no ground for building common understanding. So thus, the approach necessarily divides.

Antagonistic politics depends on this misguided approach of framing discussion in terms of conclusive reasons. The 'either for or against' paradigm presupposes that the statements in question are conclusive-reason claims, which are guaranteed to divide people. Any attempt to build the exceptions into the claims will fail (except in particular cases) and therefore, they cannot be adequate for framing policy.

Chapter 4
Towards Practice

To our conception of good governance, it might be objected that a participatory system based on consensus-building is practically impossible. For instance, it might be claimed that people are too antagonistic, too mistrustful in their social relations, and too polarised in their ideologically driven political views for participatory governance. Moreover, the kind of consensus-building we advocate is too difficult to coordinate, and too time-consuming to be practically implementable.

However, this objection only shows that, under *current* conditions, the prerequisites of participatory democracy are lacking. Indeed, one might reasonably expect that, within the existing political structure which systematically instrumentalises people and encourages divisiveness, the pre-conditions for participatory democracy would not generally be in place. One might also expect the same in a competitive capitalist economic system that tends to exploit people and in which some people are treated as underlings whose well-being matters less. Therefore, the objection that, under current conditions, participatory democracy appears practically impossible doesn't count as a good argument against it. Those conditions can be changed.

The existing instrumentalising representative system appears inevitable in part because of the fact that the historical alternatives look so much worse (Brennan and Landemore, 2021). The current system appears inexorable also because the preconditions for participatory democracy seem unattainable as if they were a fairy tale in a distant imaginary utopia. We offer a response to the fairy-tale objection in Appendix I. Still, this presents us with three challenges: first, we need to show how a participatory democratic system might work at a local level; second, we must demonstrate how it could be extended to regional and national levels. Third, we should respond to the objections regarding the practicality of such a system.

In this chapter, we reply to the first and third of these challenges. We outline some aspects of the practice of consensus-building, including: the supporting dialogues that consensus-building requires; the organisation of assemblies, including the relevant roles; the processes of collective decision-making, and their implementation. We further establish principles relevant to how the assemblies of different communities might work harmoniously together.

Typically, decision-making meetings are constructed around a linear, readily instrumentalising model in which a set of proposals are presented, discussed, amended, voted on, and then agreed on or not. As we have shown, this model is not suitable for consensus-based collective decision-making conceived as commu-

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nity understanding. Instead, what such meetings seek is mere unanimity of individual belief.[46] This linear model doesn't acknowledge the aspectual nature of beliefs nor the communal nature of consensus, which we discussed in the proceeding chapter. When a community faces something to be decided, the problems that frame the decision are up for grabs. In this case, decision-making processes need to be exploratory and more free-ranging before they can focus on a possible statement of consensus. The linear model requires revision because of the need for an epistemology of peace.

We have seen that the process of consensus-building needs to be harmonious, peaceful and directed to the well-being of the whole community. Such community assemblies have several important conditions.

Safe Communal Spaces

A fundamental condition for a good consensus-oriented meeting is that it takes place in a communal space in which all people are invited, feel safe, cared for and listened to, and are able to express their views with openness and courage. This statement already imposes important conditions on the process. It means that participants need to be committed to an ethic of peaceful communication and active listening, as well as to the more general condition of respect. How the communal spaces are conceived will have varying cultural expressions. For example, in the Gipuzkoa Province of Spain, the communal spaces are termed the 'Agoras', which means assemblies in ancient Greek. Elsewhere, such as in the Somalia indigenous nomadic communities, the collective consensus-building tends to take place in a communal space which is always set under a tree. The tree offers a safe, open and comfortable space where all are welcome. These conditions mean that people will need to partake in preparatory dialogues to become more sensitive to the feelings of others, and capacity-building to be able to express their views more openly and clearly without offending others.

Inclusive Participation

In addition to the spaces being open, inviting and welcoming, further practices must be in place to ensure inclusive participation. If groups of people are regularly

46 A worse scenario is when unanimity of beliefs is not attainable, and decision-making is achieved only through voting.

missing in the community meetings, then the organisers of such meetings must take the responsibility for finding out why, and for recommending relevant remedial actions so as to include all members of the community. Extra efforts must be made to ensure that no groups or people will feel themselves marginalised. Inclusivity is not only a good in itself, but also including everyone in the community can also help enrich community understanding. This means that there should be dialogues and collective healing processes orthogonal to the main process of the assembly to deal with persistent misunderstandings and historical antagonisms between groups and specific persons.

Epistemological Virtues

Consensus-building processes require the epistemological virtues in virtue of which people are committed to the ethics of respect, peaceful communication, and active listening. Such virtues include being more sensitive to the feelings of others and being able to express ones views more openly and clearly without offending others. As we shall see, these virtues mean that, alongside the main consensus-building process there should be preparatory dialogues, including those that contribute to collective healing, and relational enrichment, in order to thaw persistent misunderstandings and historical antagonisms between groups and amongst specific persons.

Consensus-Building as Comprising Community Well-Being

The community assembly meetings should embody the joy of being together as a diverse community. Collective community decision-making sounds like a serious task that generates strict individual duties. And, given the assumptions of an instrumental conception of rationality, it is easy to instrumentalize such processes: to view them purely as an instrumental means to the decisions taken, and the results. (See Appendix II for a critique of the instrumentalised conception of rationality). Freed from the spell of instrumentalization, community meetings can be appreciated and enjoyed as non-instrumentally valuable, as a part of our common life. After all, it is a part of a human life of well-being to be a member of a community. This requires that there are institutions that enable and enhance this aspect of human life. Primary among such institutions must be those that constitute a participatory democracy. It is part of a full or flourishing human life that we can enjoy collaborating and reflecting with others about the policies that affect the community. This includes the opportunities to understand others' perspectives

more deeply, to learn how to be with each other, and in so doing, to become less encased in egocentrism. As we have already argued, these are essential aspects of a holistic and pluralistic vision of human well-being (see Chapter 1).

Facilitation

The preconditions for consensus-building indicate the need for professional, well-trained facilitators who have the role of creating and maintaining peaceful and open spaces. The person needs the power to recommend alternative meetings to resolve misunderstandings and antagonisms that shouldn't and couldn't be resolved within a general assembly meeting. The facilitator will be aware that it is too easy to let a meeting drag on but, at the same time, a meeting that ends too soon will feel rushed and the conclusions premature. Community assemblies will be well-prepared, with a clear agenda, harmoniously coordinated, and open to follow the collective flow. Above all, facilitation will need to define the *ethos* of consensus-building, e.g. the collaboration amongst persons of equal value, the appreciation of differences as opportunities for expanding our horizons and learning, and the transformation of misunderstandings towards better understandings. Good facilitation also enables the participants to embody the tone of the shared space, in which all people feel emotionally safe to speak openly and are confident that they will be listened to without prejudgment.

Reaching Consensus

Each assembly may have its own, rhythm, progression and decision-making rituals. Under the facilitation, all participants will have the opportunity to voice their understandings and concerns of the issue discussed, and feel that they are listened to and heard. As a community, there should be a shared sense of evaluative criteria of the conversation, e.g. all perspectives are presented, there are emergent learnings or better understandings through listening to each other, and the assembly progresses in a desired direction. Where there are deep misunderstandings, the facilitators might propose to create a separate spaces for those involved to further explore the issue in-depth.

Community Consensus Statements

Community consensus statements ought to constitute sufficiently clear guidance for officials, briefs for delegates, and meta-policy recommendations. However, statements of community consensus will need to be framed at the appropriate level of generality, even at the risk of being vague. Furthermore, community consensus statements will need to employ the kind of vocabulary that harmonises the community by expressing people's common understanding without reigniting or fuelling antagonistic differences.

In this, the process of facilitation will have in sight the aim of holding the community together by bringing coherence to a seemingly chaotic discussion, and at the same time, ensuring that the meta-policy statements arising from the consensus-building process can guide practical implementation and the delegate briefings.

Preparation Through Dialogues

As indicated, the community decision-making assembly will need to be supported by a variety of accompanying dialogue processes. For instance, members of a community might not be ready to trust each other sufficiently to make collective decisions by consensus. This lack of trust could be owing to the community's history or because of other persistent misunderstandings. Hence, there will be a need for trust-building dialogues. Moreover, a community needs to become a community, and the process to achieve this must involve dialogue.

To understand this, let us continue of characterisation of dialogue, started in the previous chapter. First, by their nature dialogues contain an implicit commitment to the equal value (and reality) of all persons. This expresses a democratic ideal, namely equality in the quality of listening. This differs from the traditional approaches to democracy which tend to focus on the individual's right to voice their views. However, as we have argued, voice is empty or means nothing unless there is relevant and appropriate listening. If democracy requires an equality of voice, then it must also require open listening that respects such equality. This feature of dialogue means that participants come to the assembly circle as persons rather than as role-holders. Because of this, dialogues foster both voice and listening. For instance, during dialogues, participants suspend what they think rather than defending it (Bohm, 1996). This means that people put on hold the part of themselves that criticises, blames and judges. They don't set themselves in opposition to the other; they are more open and receptive to others. These qualities define how people listen. These features set dialogue as distinct from a discussion.

Second, a dialogue isn't only instrumentally valuable for the sake of some goal, such as solving a problem. Rather, it is also a process that is valuable for itself. In this way, it is often more like playing together than working on a task. As soon as an interaction becomes merely a means to serve a political purpose, it is no longer a dialogue. Dialogue is intrinsically meaningful as well as yielding meaningful effects. For instance, as we shall elaborate below, dialogue can contribute to collective healing. As the group opens up, people's suffering is released and sharing this experience can be cathartic and therapeutic.

This doesn't mean that dialogues shouldn't have ends, such as bringing people to understand each other better. Dialogues can have goals, but the goals do not instrumentalise the process. When it is instrumentalised, the process is treated only as valuable insofar as it contributes to the goal. In contrast, because a dialogue is a process valuable for itself, people appreciate the experience of it as such (Thomson, 2023; Gill and Thomson, 2019; Thomson, Gill and Goodson, 2020). For this reason, a community dialogue usually isn't directed to a pre-defined goal, such as the making of a decision. It doesn't seek convergence on an endpoint which would count as closure. Rather, dialogue is open-ended and amenable to unplanned and unexpected possibilities. In this sense, it is a divergent and continuing process (Cayer, 2005). This makes it different from a discussion which tends to be focused on some endpoint (Isaacs, 1999).

We are not claiming that all dialogues must have these features described above. What dialogues share is more like a family resemblance (Wittgenstein, 1986). Well-facilitated dialogues can have an almost magical transformative power. More than anything, this is because of the synergy involved in becoming a group or community that is experienced as positive and friendly. By 'positive', we mean that each person in the dialogue circle feels listened to without criticism and prejudgment, and that each recognises that this is the experience of being-*with* the other. The transformative power is also due to the creative energy released in an open-ended, divergent and non-instrumentalised process which unfolds spontaneously.

Given this brief characterisation of dialogue, we can distinguish four kinds of overlapping dialogical processes necessary for community consensus-building. These are based on relevant kinds of misunderstandings.

Encountering Each Other as Persons

The first kind of dialogue concerns encountering and getting to know and understand others. This is usually a sobering, enlightening and transforming experience. When a person opens their heart and shares the intimate experiences of their

lives, this a deeply moving experience. Usually, when people feel the suffering of another person, their sense of being kindred is augmented, and cultural and social differences vanish. This applies also to the sharing of other aspects of our shared human experience, such as the love we have for our children and parents. The process of understanding others as persons may include the perceptions that others have of oneself as a member of a group. More generally, the process is to understand others and their lives in terms that help transcend the dynamics of victim/aggressor relations. Such dialogue provides the opportunity for persons to transcend the subjectivities of oneself as a victim and the other as an aggressor. It allows us to understand how significant others perceive the relevant situations such that they see themselves as willing the good. It permits us to enter the phenomenological reality of their point of view. This kind of dialogue is called 'deep dialogue'; it aims to shift people's identities or self-identifications. It involves people listening to each other non-judgmentally and openly, to transcend non-derivative identifications and their underlying dynamics.

This kind of experience is especially important insofar as people's life narratives contribute to the formation of their political views. People's political views are often shaped by suffering, for instance, by their experiences of being exploited, used or undervalued by others. Likewise, people's political attitudes are shaped by their sense of unfairness and entitlement. Consequently, our social and political experience is often defined as a lack of justice and a violation of rights. Of course, this especially true of the poor, the vulnerable and the alienated. However, even some ruling and privileged groups may also feel victimized in an antagonistic political system.

Without dialogue, feelings of injustice and hurt are a barrier to human encounter and greater mutual understanding and solidarity, which are necessary for a more just society. The irony is that within an antagonistic system, greater justice often requires the assertion of rights that sometimes renders justice less attainable. In an antagonistic society, everyone tends to build protective walls around their self-interest, even when this harms the need for community. Hence the need for dialogue which aims to shift people's identities or self-identifications.

Collective Healing

The second kind of dialogue consists in collective healing, including healing the wounds of the past. Many communities are divided owing to historical atrocities, such as enslavement, genocide and intercommunal violence. Owing to these past wounds, groups in the community can remain separated. Furthermore, unacknowledged historical grievances and continued structural oppression mean that

the harms of dehumanisation and resulting intergenerational trauma have never had a chance to be recognised and attended to.

Owing to histories of violence, groups can sometimes self-identify as victim. Given the hermeneutic asymmetry, it is difficult for people in one group to see those in other groups with whom they don't identify as victims. Furthermore, it is also hard to perceive oneself, and the groups that one identifies with, as aggressors. These tendencies are a result of three factors: the legacies of histories of violence and dehumanisation; the subjectivity of our experience; and our propensity to identify. This often leaves some groups to self-identify as the 'victim', and regard other groups as the 'aggressor' or the 'perpetrator'. For groups who have been economic and political beneficiaries of the violent regime, they may feel shame, and guilt, and therefore will distance themselves from the victim groups. Sometimes, different groups would self-identify as the victims at the same time, and the community is further divided by competing victimhood.

Dialogue can contribute to transcending the victim-vs-aggressor dichotomy through shifts in self-identification (Thomson 2022b). It can enable groups in the community to acknowledge the histories of dehumanisation and the resulting subjectivities and identifications that tend to perpetuate the legacies of those histories. In acknowledging past pains and collective sufferings, these groups will be open to recognise the continued harms and intergenerational trauma. Together, acknowledgement and recognition help the groups to realise how their subjectivities are defined primarily by trauma, in terms of victim-vs-aggressor. In transcending the dividing self-identifications, a space is created for relational resilience and reconciliation.

This kind of dialogue can contribute to collective healing precisely because the different groups harmed by the past wounding may feel that they are no longer stuck in the pain or guilt, and remain helpless there. Instead, dialogue can bring people in the community together, and the listening space will facilitate deep sharing of pain and shame. As they step into each other's histories and present realities, people can feel that they are reconnecting with their own and other's human dignity that is with their equal non-derivative value as persons, thus integrating divided subjectivities into wholeness.

Such dialogue also supports healing because the acts of wounding that previously broke the community have been externalised, rather than being lodged in people's wounds and trauma. By removing the emotional and identity barriers, people can begin to experience relational closeness with each other, and in some cases, with so-called former enemies. This opens up additional spaces for the community to reconnect and reconcile into a community of solidarity.

Relational Enrichment and Trustbuilding

The third kind of dialogue concerns building more peaceful relationships, especially those pertaining to trust amongst different groups. As discussed in the previous chapter, we tend evaluate our actions by our intentions which are always directed at the good; whereas we judge other's intentions by the effects of their actions which are often not so good. Because of group allegiances, we tend to self-identify with some group to the exclusion of others. Indeed, identity tends to be exclusionary (Gill and Thomson, 2019). It is a matter of 'us-vs-them' the 'them' tends to get excluded. This exclusionary identity socialises and solidifies the antagonism between groups. Indeed, the very declaration 'This is my identity' can function as an affirmation of allegiance which commits one to demonise the intentions of opposition groups. Furthermore, insofar as this antagonism becomes solidified in a culture, it becomes ingrained in collective memory (Thomson, 2022b; Gill, 2023).

In trust-building dialogue, there is an opportunity to share intentions and reflect on the effects of our actions. Such an exercise allows us to understand how we might perceive the relevant situations such that we see the other as willing something good, even when they have betrayed our trust. Listening is a key in dialogues aimed at building trust in relationships. When the participants learn to listen with openness and curiosity, they can learn to understand what it means to be trustworthy in the eyes of others and what it is to trust someone very different in temperament from oneself. Listening and being heard strengthens trust between people and groups.

Questioning is another key in such dialogues. However, questions for trust-building are not to probe and identify incoherence or logical errors in what the other is saying. Instead, questions are directed at enabling the other person to elaborate more fully their idea or perspective, such as: "How would you frame this differently so that I can understand better?" or "What is the context of your comments?" Although facilitators can play an important role in using questions for the dialogue to go deeper, the community itself can also learn to focus listening and questioning on the other, and on understanding their intentions and their actions. The more we attend to the other and their lived experiences, the more we step outside of our egoism, including our own pain and grievances, the more we become trustworthy and trusting.

Above all, dialogue processes transcend the basic self-identifications which otherwise would form antagonistic social identities. They can enable us to self-identify *non-derivatively* with the other in more inclusive ways, for example, as a person, a human being, or an 'I' rather than primarily as a member of a specific social group (Gill & Thomson, 2019). The more I perceive the other as a person, the more I identify myself primarily as a person (and less as the member of an antag-

onistic group). Deep dialogues can shift *non-derivative* self-identification towards the human and, in so doing, they undermine antagonistic forms of 'us-vs-them'. The 'us-vs-them' is transformed into a 'we'.

Through all three dialogues, e. g. encounters, collective healing and trustbuilding, the community can reach better mutual understanding. This paves the path for the different groups to come together as a community, and engage in belief exploration.

Belief Exploration

The fourth kind of dialogue can be called 'belief-exploration'. Even when people cannot see eye-to-eye about a particular (say, meta-policy) proposition, nevertheless, they will feel that they can be on the same page about other propositions related to the meta-policy in question, even when the propositions about which they seem to concur are conditional. Belief-exploration dialogue also includes mutual perception regarding the relevant kinds of rhetoric. In the context of participatory governance, this kind of dialogue is particularly important as it supports the community's discussions about their common concerns and collective decisions.

We have outlined four kinds of dialogical processes that are needed to support a community in attaining consensus and involve people in the intimate sharing of personal narratives and conscious listening to each other non-judgmentally and openly. Through deep dialogue, the community may heal the brokenness as the result of intergenerational trauma, by shifting identities or self-identifications, towards transcending us-vs-them dynamics. Deep dialogue thus enables us to reframe our common concerns towards mutual understanding and common understanding.

So far, we have only explored local community assemblies and their preparations. These constitute the core governance process, without which the whole system cannot work (Bryan, 2010). To understand how a decentralised system can support participatory democracy, we need to explore the other ingredients that constitute a decentralised system.

Implementation and Officials

So far, we have studied only the assembly, and the core governance process, and moreover, we have considered this only at the local level. However, rethinking governance requires more than the decision-making of local assemblies. Additionally, we need to rethink how these decisions would be put into practice. The community

will make decisions about what should be done, and these decisions will need to be implemented. We also need to think about the participation of the community in wider wholes, such as the region and the nation as a whole. This is the theme of the next chapter.

The Power of the People

In general, the idea is to construct a system in which there are no politicians who compete for power and seek to maintain the power, and indeed there will be no political power to gain. In *The Logic of Political Survival*, the authors claim that the essence of governance is "the politics behind survival in office", where "all actions taken by political leaders are intended by them to be compatible with their desire to retain power" (de Mesquita et al, 2003, 8–9). The book suggests that politicians gain and retain power through the allegiance of a winning coalition among a wider selectorate. Political systems with small winning coalitions and a large selectorate tend to be autocracies, and supporters of the leader are loyal because the risk and cost of exclusion are high. Conversely, political systems with large coalitions and large selectorates tend to be democracies in which there are weaker bonds of loyalty. The authors' aim is to show how political institutions shape the goal of some leaders to produce peace and prosperity, and others, war and famine.

Although this is a fruitful approach, it assumes an unrelenting realism such that governance must be premised on the gaining and retaining of political rulers' or leaders' power. The authors presuppose that there cannot be an alternative, one in which the essence of politics isn't political power of the few *per se* but rather the coalescing and implementing people's voice. A political system should be a way for the people to organize their decision-making. We have argued that this should be non-instrumentalising, and peaceful and well-being directed. From this point of view, the current system is upside-down because, within it, the well-being and voice of the people is typically only a derivative consideration, secondary to the pursuit of political power by rulers. It is upside-down because the system instrumentalises what should be primary. In this, we are not challenging the behaviour patterns of individual politicians and leaders, but rather the design of the institutions that underlies the system.

De-Politicised Positions

There are several aspects to conceiving a system turned the right way-round. One is that the appointment to key positions needs to be depoliticized. At the moment,

the appointment of people to positions isn't really seen as such; rather it is conceived as an ascension to power. Consequently, those who are so elected govern us, the people. This is back-to-front. It assumes that the only way to have a democratic system is to have appointments by popular election, even though this process is wide open to systemic instrumentalisation. This indicates that we need to find ways to appoint people to key governance roles that are democratic and not so readily instrumentalised.

For example, *mini republics* could be established to select officials from a pool of open candidates in much the same way that panels select people to take up roles in companies and organisations. The process can be so designed that there is no propaganda-like appeal to public opinion, no need for campaigns or political adverts, and no need for extensive funding. The process can be designed so that all who have suitable capacities and experiences can become a candidate. The purpose is to identify candidates to serve key governance roles.

In short, we shouldn't simply assume that the most or the only democratic appointment process is popular elections, when these are very politicised or instrumentalised, especially when they result in appointments that aren't responsive to public consensus, and which aren't readily reversed. The process of removing persons from office needs to be more streamlined than the cumbersome holding of fresh public elections.

For these reasons, we need to replace the ideas of politician and leader with a set of official roles. For participatory governance, the roles of officials need to be designed so that their focus is to enable the power of the people to be well organised. That would be the job of the officials. In this way, there will be no political power for politicians and political leaders to grab or fight for. This doesn't mean that officials won't have the necessary authority to make decisions and to do their work well. We shall return to the difference between *power* and *political power* later in this chapter.

In participatory governance, there would be two kinds of officials: the non-executive and the executive. Non-executive officials are those whose roles are to help translate meta-policy into policy documents and legislative proposals. Executive officials are tasked to implement the collective decisions. Both should be distinguished from the *facilitators* of assemblies, the *council members* and the *delegates.*

Facilitators

During consensus-building, the assembly will need to be supported by professional facilitators. The tasks of the facilitators may vary according to the assembly's requirements, but these generally include the following: (a) creating and maintaining open, comfortable and caring spaces; (b) helping the community to prepare an

agenda; (c) framing the meeting in such a way that each participant can share their perspectives openly and candidly; (d) keeping the group focused on one issue a time until a shared understanding is reached; (e) actively listening to all the different points; (f) checking for the common understandings, and providing summaries or synthesis to help the community reach a collective decision

However, when there are continued misunderstandings, the facilitators can recommend alternative meetings to resolve them, or suggest dialogues for trust-building and transcending conflicts. The facilitators would also coordinate the agenda of the assembly meetings with those of other local and regional assemblies. This means that facilitators will liaise with other officials and delegates. Usually, it would be wise for the persons who facilitate the assembly to also facilitate the meetings of the council, in order to enable greater harmony between the decisions of the assembly and the work of the council.

All of this suggests that the facilitators of the meetings should be politically neutral and perceived as such. Because it is a vital role that requires warranted trust, there needs to be a professional body for the ethics and training of such facilitators.

The Council and Councillors

The assembly may decide to establish a council, which can take decisions of a specified kind on behalf of the assembly, and to which the assembly delegates some of its overseeing and appointment functions. A council may be appointed by the local, regional and national assembly. Broadly speaking, the role of the council is to clarify and amplify the decisions of the assembly. This council might be appointed as a mini-republic along lottocratic lines by members of the assembly. It would be responsible to the assembly, which would delegate to it the function of working with the executive team. The council may also have its own distinct officials, such as a secretariat. These officials would be directly responsible to the council itself rather than to the executive of the assembly.

Non-Executive Officials: Drafting Policies

The policy decisions of assemblies and their councils will usually consist in meta-policy statements, which means they are recommendations for writing policy rather than the policy itself. To that end, each assembly and council will need a professional policy drafting team. These constitute the non-executive officials. If the relevant decisions of the assembly need to be changed into laws, then the drafting team will also need to be able to write the relevant legislation. These drafting teams will be sworn to be neutral, that is, to interpret the decisions of the assembly in the way that best fits the available evidence of what was agreed. The term ‘neu-

tral' here doesn't mean the impossible requirement of not having prejudgments, values and concepts, and of not making assumptions. Instead, it means having the sincere wish to interpret the decisions of the assembly and its council in such a way that is aligned with the intention and content of those decisions.

The draft of policy statements offer guidelines to executive officials, for implementing decisions in ways that would accord with the will of the assembly and its council. This is why the work of the assembly, council and the officials presupposes trust, respect and good-will. The drafting teams will need to work closely with the executive, but theirs is not an executive role.

Executive Officials: Implementing Decisions

The role of the executive is to implement the decisions of the assembly or its council. These executive officials are non-political appointments who have sworn to being neutral. The work of the various executive officials will be coordinated by a chief executive officer (CEO) [47] or rather a chief operating officer (COO), who reports directly back to the assembly and the council and its various sub-committees. The COO has sworn to perform their functions in the relevant politically neutral way. The COO is not the chairperson or president of the assembly, nor a figure-head or a political leader. They are more like civil servants in the British sense of the term.

In addition, the assembly should also appoint a treasurer or finance officer independent of the COO. This officer would be responsible for estimating costs for various policy decisions and for constructing and overseeing the budget, financing and spending. Clearly, there would be a need for an independent auditor who reports directly to the assembly.

In the UK, local mayors are like an CEO who is elected directly by the population of the local municipality, county or borough. However, a UK mayor is typically a political appointment, endorsed by a party, and they serve as a local figurehead. The proposed role of the COO of the local assembly would be very different in this regard. If a figure-head is necessary then the local assembly can appoint a commu-

47 The term "CEO' indicates different roles in different parts of the world. For example, in the USA typically, the president of a company is its CEO who is the main person who represents the corporation to shareholders and to the public. This is reflected in the role of the president of the country. In contrast, in the UK, typically, there is a distinction between the chairperson of the company who is the main representative of the company and who chairs the meetings of the board but whose position is non-executive, and the CEO. In the UK corporate system, the distinction between policy and executive is in theory more clear-cut.

nity ambassador, who handles public relations and attends public events on behalf of the community. In other words, it is distinct role from that of the COO.

A more complete study of these executive roles would include job descriptions for the COO and some of the officials with responsibility, including the treasurer and the secretary of the assembly, as well as of the councillors themselves. The assembly may need to appoint directly other officials, such as ombudsmen, who need to function independently of the COO.

The more a community can trust the people who serve in an executive function, the more it can recognise that their executive work is a distinct process which requires a different optic from that of the assembly itself. This is one reason why we keep policy distinct from execution. In other words, the implicit idea of the community assembly might be:

> "We can attempt to reach the best consensus we can; there are bound to be points that are vague; we will try to convey the agreed common sense of our community in as much detail and as clearly as possible. We ask you, our executive officials, to implement the spirit of these agreements; we understand that the process of implementing this kind of consensus is quite distinct from reaching it, and that the relevant outlooks are different. Nevertheless, we trust you, our appointed officials, to do your best in implementing our collective decision. We also trust you, our appointed officials, to come back to us for clarification when you find some points confusing, or some decisions difficult to carry out."

Delegates

A local assembly needs to appoint a delegate to the regional processes, and the delegates from the relevant local assemblies would form a regional assembly. Likewise, a regional assembly appoints a delegate to the national under similar terms. The delegates draw on local consensus and engage in regional decision-making processes, and they bring the regional consensus to the national processes in which the regions gather to consider what is best for the nation or territory as a whole.

The delegate is a person who strictly fulfils the function described and who isn't seeking power for themselves, and who isn't a secret representative of some special interest group. As we shall explain, this means that the local delegates at the regional assembly are entrusted to appoint a regional delegate at national assembly. Delegates will ensure that the local consensus contributes appropriately to regional and national assemblies' decisions. The regional assembly cannot appoint a delegate who will ignore local assemblies within the region.

Summary

As we shall see, at each level, we must retain the distinction between the roles of facilitator, delegate, official and member of the council. In each case, the role-holders are responsible to the assembly that appoints them. For instance, a regional council will consist of members of the regional assembly, whose work is to articulate policy that accords with the consensus of the assembly. National delegates are members of the regional assembly, and their role is to make the consensus and deliberations of the regional community understandable and to render it a significant voice in the national consensus-building processes.

In contrast to delegates, the facilitator has to construct the spaces that enable consensus. Like officials, the facilitator has a role that prevents him or her from being an active participant in the consensus-building process itself. His or her function is to facilitate the process, build the consensus from the discussions, and put the results seamlessly into words that capture the inputs of all into a coherent whole. This is a paid position.

As we have seen, we can distinguish between two types of officials: executive and non-executive. Non-executive are those who support the relevant council or assembly in their policy decision-making with technical support, guidance and research. Non-executive officials are also necessary to help translate meta-policy into policy and the latter into legislation. Their work is to clarify and translate the decisions of the assembly and council. In contrast, executive officials implement those decisions. Officials will not be members of the assembly. These too are paid impartial positions. The official has to take the relevant consensus of the community and translate it into policy or law or action.

If an assembly tries to attain a consensus full of complex specific details, this will destroy their process (as well as being even more time-demanding). Furthermore, the demand for such specificity might be an expression of mistrust – it can constitute a lack of trust of the executive officials who must put consensus into practice and who should know better the implementation conditions. When this is the case, it is better to address the mistrust directly rather than make the consensus-building process more legalistic and inappropriately specific.

The processes of appointment will be different in the cases of facilitator and delegate. For example, to ensure that the appointments are not politicised, the assembly may ask a randomly selected mini-republic to review the applicants for the positions of facilitator and to recommend an appointment. However, in the case of the regional council and the local delegate to the region, the relevant assembly would want to be more directly involved in the appointment process. Although these two appointment processes need to be depoliticised insofar as possible, the appointment of officials would be non-political.

These broad and tentative suggestions follow, in spirit, the proposal that officials are not political appointments. A participatory system can take the politics out of governance and discourage antagonism. Thus, in a participatory democracy, there is no need and no place for political parties, as we shall see. Furthermore, at the moment, appointments are often dominated by personality issues because this is what sells to the general public, who have been reduced to electors. This domination by personality issues distracts and demeans electors; it often makes policy secondary, and it hides that the definition of political roles is vitally important, even though it is seldom raised as an issue.

In a non-instrumentalising system, there may well be corruption. However, individual acts of corruption wouldn't be the icing on a cake of corruption, as it is now. In short, the system itself wouldn't be corrupt, even if some individuals behave in corrupt ways. Much thinking around these issues is hopelessly dichotomised around the false duality of self-interest and altruism. According to this false dichotomy, self-interest is basically having more instrumental means, such as money, and altruism is helping others at the expense of one's self-interest. To escape this dichotomy, it is *not* adequate to say or think 'people are usually motivated by both'. Rather the point is that human well-being isn't constituted by either. Material self-interest is derivative; it only has value in relation to well-being. Material self-interest is external to the living of well-being. Also, well-being is relational; it must include how others are a part of one's life. However, 'altruism' doesn't touch this: the relations we have with others who are a part of our lives are not instances of altruism. We want to avoid thinking either the altruists are saints or else they are simply in it for the money. Neither constitute the core of well-being.

Replies to Objections

In this chapter, we sketched out how local and regional assemblies may be structured to hold the consensus-building processes. These are supported by preparatory dialogues to enable the community to come together as a community. Still there remains huge practical difficulty of attaining consensus, which also can be subject to manipulation and instrumentalisation.

It might well be argued that, even with all the supporting processes functioning well, consensus-building can still fail. The term 'fail' needs qualification. Consensus-building processes are supposed to embody social relations of equality and peace, in which power belongs to the people. These processes are part of the community life that they further enrich and strengthen. They also provide the community with a sense of direction and of progress that is both educative and ethical. It would be a mistake to conceive consensus-building as merely instru-

mentally valuable in relation to policy decisions, as we see when we study lottocracy. Therefore, in this context, the term 'fail' refers specifically to the inability of the community to come to a decision.

One major way it might fail can be stated as a dilemma. On the one hand, voting instrumentalises the process of community consensus-building. *Inter alia*, it especially instrumentalises the minority who didn't vote for the proposal. On the other hand, consensus leaves the community open to being exploited by stubborn persons who can hold the community hostage to their veto. Consensus takes us from the fire to the frying pan. Voting takes from the frying pan into the fire. Seemingly, we cannot evade the danger of someone being burned by instrumentalisation in the political process.

This difficulty can be treated either as a practical problem that needs to be solved through careful design, or else as an objection to the whole concept of participatory democracy. The objection is likely to fall short unless it can be shown that the practical problems cannot be solved or can only be solved given some exorbitant costly conditions, such as disenchanting long meetings.

We have sketched some of the working features of consensus-based participatory governance, which constitute the necessary parts of a community's political life. The question to reflect on is: Are they enough? Do they show that the practical difficulties can be overcome? This empirical question is difficult to answer because, in some contexts, consensus-building processes look viable according to a reasonable set of criteria. In others, they look shaky or unreliable. Furthermore, the relevant empirical studies are undertaken in cultural conditions that are very different from those would apply in a participatory democracy. One would expect that in a society that is not built on instrumentalising institutions, the three necessary preconditions of a participatory system would be widely present. The society would be more willing to regard itself as a community rather than as a collection of mistrustful individuals. Given all of this, there is no definitive empirical evidence to appeal to either way in answer to our question: are the suggestions enough? Under these conditions, we might reasonably hypothesise that the obstacles to arriving at a community consensus would be greatly reduced but not entirely eliminated.

This suggests that a participatory system might need a safety-valve. The framing of the problem at the beginning of this section helps in envisaging such a valve. This framing was that, in order to avoid the instrumentalisation inherent in a voting system, we risk the instrumentalisation of the whole community by a stubborn group that holds the community hostage. Framed in this way, the problem becomes: a system that doesn't instrumentalise is vulnerable to being abused by groups who might instrumentalise the community as a whole, by using consensus-building as if it provided them with a veto power. In short, the stubborn

group tries to subvert the consensus-building process by violating the three preconditions.

This way of describing the situation helps to characterise what the community should do when it is threatened by such a group. In this case, the stubborn persons aren't participating with everyone as equals in a community. In normal circumstances, a community can decide *by consensus* that, for a certain issue, it will make its decisions through voting. Or it can decide that certain issues would revert to voting after a specific time has passed. If such a procedure is well facilitated, then no-one would be treated as politically less than an equal through the introduction of such voting. Now, in the special circumstances in which some people are instrumentalising the community as a whole by treating consensus as a veto power then clearly, they wouldn't agree to switch to a voting process. However, under such conditions, the community can legitimately revert to voting without the consent of the persons in question because they are instrumentalising the community's process. For example, under such conditions, the facilitators might call a regional ombudsman whose job is to examine the claim that a group are instrumentalising the process with a view to switching to a percentage majority vote on this specific issue (say 90%). The justification for such a process is that the group is in effect instrumentalising everyone else even after due process, and the community can be justified in calling for decision based on a vote rather than on consensus in this kind of case. This kind of safety-value needs to be designed with care because the community might fall back into using it as a default position to avoid engaging with inconvenient views.

Consensus-building processes can fail to reach decisions, and there is no higher authority to appeal to when they do (because there is no higher authority than the people). This means that the community needs to design appropriate safety-valves to retain their peaceful integrity as a community, and to make some relevant decisions when there is a breakdown in the process. However, any safety-valves designed for when consensus breaks down after all the processes have been exhausted must be such that they don't violate the four principles set out at the start of this book.

A second issue still to be addressed is the objection that there would be radical disagreements within a participatory system. A radical disagreement is one that *cannot* be settled. The reply to this objection has four parts. First, we need to exclude the idea that the truth or justifiability or rationality of political beliefs is relative to some basic beliefs or commitments, such as ideological and religious ones. If they were basic, then no other beliefs could count as evidence for or against them. Arguments for the claim that there are radical disagreements often depend on this kind of relativism. The relevant form of relativism is really a sophisticated kind of subjectivism, which we argued against in an earlier chapter. For purposes

of the discussion, we will discount the idea that there are radical disagreements because some form of subjectivism is true. We shall assume that we are talking about radical disagreement without subjectivism. Second, the term 'cannot' is always conditional. Even in physics, there is no absolute 'cannot'.[48] What is possible and impossible always depends on a given set of conditions. Thus, when theorists and common-sense claim that there are radical disagreements that *cannot* be settled, the truth of such a claim assumes a set of conditions. The assertions that it is *impossible* for feminists and religious advocates or for conservatives and socialists to agree assumes a set of unspecified conditions. The point of having the dialogues and other supporting processes outlined in this chapter is to change the conditions under which agreement and consensus currently appear impossible. This means that the objection that there are radical disagreements is unclear because we can move the goalposts. Currently, the political domain is dominated by institutions that have an embedded interest in polarising division (political parties). The panorama would look very different without them.

Third, given the aspectual and relation nature of believing, disagreement depends on the level of generality: Do Christians and Muslims have radical disagreement about God? Well, despite all the differences about the Trinity, they do agree with each other compared to atheists. Do those theological differences even potentially constitute a radical disagreement? It depends on the context. Even in the context of a theoretical theological debate, the disagreement may be unclear: it depends on what is meant by 'son'. Soon, under the optic of the microscope, the differences may seem unimportant compared to the similarities. What we are doing is not denying disagreement; we are challenging the idea that some are radical.

Finally, we have already seen that consensus is possible even with disagreement. There is no reason why Jewish, Muslim and Christians cannot have shared common religious practices. In a similar vein, there is no a priori reason why two currently oppositional groups cannot find a common understanding on the policies about which they disagree. The idea that they have *radical* disagreement fails to take into consideration that believing is aspectual: "although, in that way, we don't agree, but in this way, we do. Let us build on the latter." Consensus is akin to this willingness rather than pure disagreement over a specific proposition.

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48 Here we need to distinguish physical and mathematical possibility. Physical impossibilities assume physical conditions. For example, it is possible for X to go faster than the speed of light if X has a negative mass. Mathematical impossibilities assume the semantics of the terms in which those impossibilities are couched.

Appendix I: A Reply To The Fairy-Tale Criticism

Given the nature of our project, it is not an essential requirement to present a theory of change that shows how societies might move from where they are now to this better system (although we will examine some suggestions in the final chapter). Our aim isn't to suggest reforms to the current institutions, but to propose a new way to conceive governance, with different structures, processes and practices at its heart.

Furthermore, our task is to show that when a society embraces participatory democracy, other institutions would also be radically different. Take the economic system as an example. Our project highlights that a well-being-oriented economic system would be based on the non-instrumentalising principles articulated in Chapter 1. It would not be capitalistic. It is a powerful idea that representative democracy is a reflection of the kind of capitalistic economic system that prevails in many countries. Representative democracy allows wealthy elites to captire it and profit from it. Many of the metaphors that describe economic relations within this system, such as competition and alienation, seemingly apply to the political. They apply to other domains, such as the educational.

With regard to the difficulties concerning the practicality of participatory democracy, we can legitimately claim that some problems would not arise within a new system. For example, the proposed participatory democracy is time-consuming. Under the current capitalistic economic system, people are so pressurised by the need to survive that they would not want to nor have the time to participate in community processes. The wealthy might try to pay others to ensure that they don't need to spend time with the *hoi-polloi.* The poor cannot afford the time. Those that are in-between are busy competing with others in the market, building their careers, feeding their ambitions, or taking care of their families. Thus, under the current political economic structure, the proposed governance processes, e. g. public meetings and deep dialogue, would not be well attended on a regular basis. However, this practical objection wouldn't be so readily applicable in a fairer economic system in which the overriding drive for profits is not the main motivation of the system, and in which people need not feel the pressure to compete. It wouldn't be applicable in a system in which everyone shares in a common life as a community.

Similar considerations apply to other important aspects of the consensus-building process. For instance, in the current economic system, antagonistic competition is a defining feature of many parts of the society. So is the accompanying mistrust that others are trying to gain advantage over one, and so are the egoistic motivations that often make this mistrust well-founded. In other words, in a non-instrumentalising governance, such impeding factors will be much reduced.

Likewise, the current political economic system breeds educational inequalities. Schools in poor neighbourhoods receive less funding than those in wealthy ones, and the quality of education is uneven, and in the deprived areas, education suffers. Furthermore, the educational system itself is often designed around the idea that children need to have a head start in *getting ahead* of their peers from an early age! Or that no child should be left behind in the *race* to get ahead! Educational aims and processes reflect the competitive and individualistic nature of our society. In its design, it coaches some people for the race for plum jobs, whilst the majority are prepared to receive orders as employees. This point indicates that, in a participatory democracy and non-capitalist economy, education would be directed towards very different aims, which would include ones that prepare people better to participate in democratic forums. Therefore, we shouldn't assume that, in a participatory democracy, people will be as ignorant and suspectable to propaganda as they are in ours.

Nevertheless, although this general point is true, we cannot simply hypothesise the difficulties and challenges away. We need to address the central ones directly. This means that the reply to this kind of challenge has three parts. The first pertains to the system as a whole, which have already briefly considered. The second concerns the culture that surrounds local governance processes and, in part, this depends on the educational system, as well as the general *ethos* of the society. The third pertains to the way that public spaces are constructed, and consensus-building processes are facilitated.

Appendix II: Critique of the Instrumentalised Conception of Rationality

Given the assumptions of an instrumental conception of rationality, it is easy to instrumentalise consensus-building processes: to view them purely as an instrumental means to the decisions taken, the results. According to an instrumentalised conception of rationality, the rational should always be defined in terms of the efficiency of means for attaining a set of given ends. To overcome this misconception, earlier we drew a four-fold distinction between, on the one side, means and ends, and on the other, the instrumentally valuable and the non-instrumentally valuable. Such a four-way distinction is necessary to transcend the instrumentalised conception of rationality which is deeply flawed because it identifies means with the instrumentally valuable and the non-instrumentally valuable with ends. This is a ruinous error, albeit one that is at first difficult to appreciate. It is disastrous because it commits us the claim that only ends or goals can be non-instrumentally valuable, and to the idea that means as such can only be instrumentally valuable. In the gen-

eral context of human well-being, this goal-directed conception of rationality cannot articulate the non-derivative value of the life of persons and other conscious beings. This is because our end-directed actions are means, and according to the misguided conception of rationality, this implies that all our activities are only instrumentally valuable as such. Such a view denies that our lives are non-derivatively valuable, and therefore, it denies that we are.

Escaping this instrumentalised conception of rationality is important for understanding participatory democracy. Under the sway of such a misconception, alternative systems such as lottocracy look very appealing: more efficient than participatory democracy and more fair than representative democracy (Lafont, 2019). We have already argued against this error. Everyone should participate in the development of the community as a whole. Otherwise, they will be instrumentalized by being left out and forced to accept the decisions of others. Efficiency isn't the primary value in this context. Additionally, under the spell of the instrumentalised misconception of rationality, participatory assemblies can easily become a puritanical joyless duty, valuable only for their results. No wonder that, according to this conception, when the results appear paltry, the whole process of community deliberation looks replaceable. No wonder that, under such a conception, members of the community will tend not to appreciate and value being together as a community, even though such togetherness is an ineluctable facet of human well-being.

In the context of participatory democracy, this instrumentalised view of rationality is fatal because it doesn't allow us to articulate the claim that deliberative processes *as means* can have non-instrumental value. This is an important notion. It is roughly the idea that such community processes are valuable in themselves, for what they are rather than only because of what they seek to achieve.[49]

49 A more accurate statement would be that they are non-instrumentally valuable *as result-seeking processes.*

Chapter 5
A Decentralised System

Let us remind ourselves of the core task of this book: our aim is to envisage a good governance system that doesn't instrumentalise, respects all people equally, and involves that peaceful processes of consensus-building, which are aimed at enhancing collective well-being. Consensus-building within participatory governance requires strategically designed practices with supporting processes which are different in quality and content from those within a representative system. The epistemological and other virtues necessary for consensus will need to be continuously strengthened, especially in the light of the myriad misunderstandings that tend to threaten the community's communal sense. As we explored in the previous chapter, among the epistemological virtues that are of special importance are those pertaining to peaceful communication and relational bonds, especially respect, trust and good will.

This chapter proposes a framework for characterising a non-instrumentalising system, which must be decentralised.

Current Systems

We will contrast our proposal with the current centralised representative system. For this, it is necessary to continue showing how the existing system inherently instrumentalises, and how a our proposal might constitute a viable system that embodies the principles of good governance proposed in Chapter 1.

Political Parties

Political parties are contrary to a participatory democracy, and we should welcome their transformation or their vanishing from the political landscape. The basis of the argument for this is very simple: they are institutions that instrumentalise politics. This isn't something they typically do in moments of maliciousness, but rather it is a tendency built into their design and *raison d'être.* Their fundamental aim is to become a political monopoly. It is to gain power to institute a set of policies that will favour certain sectors of the electoral population to the exclusion of others. Of course, parties often apparently start off with idealistic aims and deeply held principled policy positions. However, these aims, for example, with regard to freedom and equality, quickly become subverted or overridden by the need for the political

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power required to attain those ends. In this way, parties typically subvert themselves: to gain the power needed to achieve their noble ends, they themselves defeat those ends. In actuality, the aim of a political party is political power.

Let us consider a comparison. With respect to capitalism, it is absurd for a society to construct legal entities whose main non-derivative purpose is to maximise profits, and then complain that those same entities ruin the atmosphere, exploit or underpay workers, lie about the ingredients in the food they make etc. It is absurd to make a machine that instrumentalises everything except profit, and then complain when it does precisely that. As we shall see in another volume, the response to this absurdity should be to redesign the social machines. Corporations don't have to be profit-maximising entities that tend to instrumentalise everything else. We can change the legislation and the institutional relations that make corporations profit-maximising organisations. The situation is analogous to political parties. If we construct an entity that, by definition, in its very formation, aims to gain power and beat its competitors, then we have constructed an organization that instrumentalises and breeds antagonism. Its aim isn't to discuss but rather to win discussions, and this means to dominate how society thinks. This goal of winning and dominating is akin to that of an aspiring monopoly, to eliminate or weaken the competition.

It is not surprising then that people who assume roles in such an organisation quickly follow suit in their personal aims. The officials of parties have functions defined by the monopolistic political aims of the party and by allegiance to those aims. Supporters of the party define themselves as such by being against something else. If institution A is self-defined as against B, and institution B is defined as against A (as, for example, popular parties often are in relation to socialism and neo-liberalism) then such self-definitions make propaganda warfare seem rational, as well as inevitable. Such antagonisms quickly escalate. When people self-define partly in these terms, their perceived self-interest will include demonising the views of the opposite groups. If you are against view B, then you need to make B seem as unsympathetic as you possibly can. This becomes part of our self-identification, and hence perceived self-interest. As a result, society finds itself in the position in which many people define themselves politically by their position in a two-dimensional oppositional field. For example, increasingly, in many countries, those on the right cannot abide socialism, and those of the left cannot tolerate neoliberalism. To be for one is *ipso facto* to be against the other. Indeed, these very semantics of the terms seem to have the polarization built into them. This means that issues can quickly become emblems or symbols of something else.

This polarised approach reinforces the erroneous idea that a society is primarily an arena for competition. The underlying assumption is that this is for the overall benefit of all, that competition benefits everyone, even when it benefits some

more than others, and that inequality is an unfortunate and unavoidable spandrel. However, such a view is only plausible given individualism, which assumes that persons are autonomous social atoms motivated only by narrowly defined self-interest. This contradicts the ideas that a society consists in a nesting of communities and that people can have non-instrumentalised personal relationships. In short, it destroys the idea that we are genuinely a community and erodes society as a companionship between people. It is refuted by friendship and love, properly understood (Rousseau 1997, *The Social Contract*, Book II, Chapter 3).

The polarisation constitutes an instrumentalisation of persons, which can escalate to a climax akin to a war. Parties claim allegiance from their supporters for views that define the other as an enemy, who are blamed for society's woes. Discourse that softens this demonization is a betrayal of the party-line. When all engage in this behaviour, it amounts to an intensification of instrumentalisation. This doesn't just lead to violence; it already is violence. It defines other people as an enemy, as someone who needs to be defeated. In defining others as an ill-willed foe, it gives warrant to all sorts of dehumanisation. However, the instrumentalisation is not only mutual but also self-inflicted. As an institution designed to gain power in opposition to others, a political party instrumentalises its own supporters and members to this purpose. It defeats its own original noble aims.

The polarisation also comprises a tendency to instrumentalise claims to truth and knowledge. They become party weapons. Furthermore, political parties tend to instrumentalise the public's understanding of policy, and claim allegiance from their supporters for a pre-set package of policies, defined in opposition to the other parties. Each bloc thereby strengthens its identity in opposition to the other, and potentially all issues can quickly become politicised. This locks society into a huge set of false dichotomies, a two-dimensional split which limits the attempt to construct new understandings that transcend such dualities. For example, in some countries, popular discussions tend to focus on the extent of governmental regulations and the size of government or on taxation policies. Other discussions tend to focus around law and traditional morality especially the application of retributive justice. The exclusive focus on these kinds of polarising issues constricts deep interchange. It also inculcates epistemological vices. People are seldom ready to challenge their own basic beliefs, or to even listen to beliefs that contradict their own. While there are heated debates among those on the left and the right, these are often tactical, and discussions between the divides are usually polemical confrontations. They are often little more than an exchange of blames. In summary, parties function like blinkers.

The main conclusion follows logically from the premises: we need to abandon political parties. The first premise was that ideological antagonism is integral to political parties, and the second was that we need to avoid such antagonism. We

have just reviewed several reasons for the second premise. We will restate the main analysis in clear terms. We will then refine this by replying to objections.

First, a political party is an entity that seeks to win elections, and therefore it seeks that other parties lose, and since the other parties also have the same aim, the institution defines the political domain as essentially competitive in an antagonistic sense. This means that the field of politics becomes a war zone in which there is a tendency to instrumentalise everything in order to gain more of the votes that count than one's opponents. This is why the vocabulary and rationality of war neatly fits politics; for example, campaigns and battlegrounds. Given the present system, the rational in politics is identified in terms of the self-interested maximising choices of actors within an antagonistic competitive system. It is roughly the approach of game theory: to work out what is rational for self-interested agents to do given the actions of the others. Such a definition does not allow one to step outside the partial point of view of a self-interested agent, to question the rationality of the competitive system as a whole. This identification indicates that parties will try to enhance social divisions and make alliances within those divisions. Increasingly, such divisions are not simply class-based but also based on race, ethnicity, gender, religious affiliation and ideological allegiances. Nevertheless, political parties are integral to the narratives and processes that create social divisions because they need identifiable enemies. This indicates that they will create new divisions and alliances when this serves the purpose of winning elections and gaining power.

Second, ultimately, the main aim of a political party is to capture the state. The ideal for a political party is to eliminate the opposition, like a monopoly does in a market, and to control the state. Insofar as this is the primary aim of a political party, it means that the institution will instrumentalize all else to its primary aim.[50] Insofar as this is the primary aim, it also means that the primary purpose of the political party is undemocratic. Eliminating the competition means winning the war of ideas by expunging ways of thinking that are contrary to the party line. It replaces discussion with marketing as warfare.

Third, a political party has a creed or dogma. With respect to core propositions, it won't listen to others. It will tend to avoid building a more inclusive understanding of policy principles. This doesn't mean that political parties won't shift their policies over time, but rather that they will do so insofar as they think that this will help them win. Also, it means that they tend to treat elements of

50 The word 'primary' is important here. It indicates that the other aims are subsidiary or servants to the primary aim. In contrast, the term 'the main aim' suggests that the organisation has many aims but one is more important but without it being the case that the others are subsidiary; in the latter case, the aims are independent.

the party manifesto as a product that needs to be marketed, which is a major kind of instrumentalisation of persons, of their epistemological agency. Ultimately, it means that what matters primarily are votes rather than persons.

Fourth, as with some other institutions, there is a tendency for the organisation to defeat its own purposes. This occurs when the organization acquires self-interests that defeat the external purposes it was originally supposed to serve. In the case of political parties, this occurs because in conditions of competition, a party that doesn't look after its own interests by putting winning as a primary aim will tend to disappear. This is especially true in a voting system in which winner takes all. But, even in a proportional system, smaller parties will live in the hope of playing a pivotal role in a coalition that will give them power. Given the earlier point that a party exists to acquire power, it tends to be an organization which puts its own self-interest over those of persons. Parties acquire self-interests as if they were persons. Under conditions of competition, to survive as an entity, one has to fight, which requires fostering institutional resilience and strength. One needs to: build financial stability, defend oneself against criticisms, command allegiance and acquire power over people. Insofar as these forms of self-interest become primary aims, they threaten the very purpose for which the institution was created.

Furthermore, the competition that defines party politics effectively reifies the party, as if it were a person in its own right that has self-interest. This implies that people in the relevant roles, including voters, can be subservient to these interests. Thus political parties can routinely undermine the original good intentions that spurred their creation. The political realism that engulfs contemporary political thinking accepts this situation as normal.

Fifth, parties are open to being instrumentalised. In escalating competitive conditions, parties need increased revenue. If party A spends X dollars on marketing then party B will need to spend X + Y in order to stand a chance of winning. Given this, party A will need to spend X + Y + Z … and so on. Under such conditions, parties need to create strong, consistent revenue sources, to which they will tend to be hostage. This is a major way in which political power dynamics tends to reinforce the economic inequalities of a society. Therefore, when it is claimed that the wealthy capture the state to further their own interests, this needn't be a deliberate act because the institutional arrangements ensure that it will happen as if by its own accord. In short, with political parties, the instrumentalisers themselves become instrumentalized. Because they aim to capture the state, and because they need revenue, they are themselves inherently vulnerable to becoming instrumentalized and seized by economic interests. Washington serves Wall Street and Westminster serves the City. The current system tends to ensure that the wealthy can employ political power for the protection of their interests.

It might be objected that we have described political parties in importantly mistaken ways. First, in describing the aims of a political party, we have missed an important aspect: namely that the party's fundamental aim is the benefit of citizens, including even those who are not in favour of the policies of the party. The party is built around the conviction that only certain policies will lead to a prosperous harmonious nation, and that any other policies are potentially dangerous. Therefore, the aim of the party isn't simply to gain power and capture the state; it is to benefit people. Each party presents a vision for a society. Therefore, it is normal and perfectly reasonable that people who share this conviction should associate in order to work together for their common mission. Second, it might be added that the right to associate in these ways is an integral part of any healthy democratic society. People of like minds need to gather in order to promote their ideas. This is a fundamental right in a democratic society. A society that doesn't allow this would constitute a totalitarian state. Third, it will be objected that the description of the role of competition in politics in the argument is misleading. Competition in the political field is inevitable and healthy; it ensures that relatively reasonable policies will prevail.

The reply to the first objection is to reiterate the point that, *even if* parties are founded with noble aims concerning human well-being, their search for the political means to achieve these aims ends up thwarting the original intent. They defeat their own purposes by creating ideological creeds, instrumentalising voters and by themselves being captured by vested interests, all within an antagonistic system. In reply to the second objection, people should not have the legal right to assemble in order to instrumentalise political processes for the sake of capturing the state or power from the people. People should not have the right to form alliances for the sake of gaining political monopoly and silencing others. These are akin to paramilitary organisations albeit ones that don't use guns, but which instead weaponize news reporting, political discourse and processes. With respect to the third objection, we will discuss political competition later in this chapter.

Campaigns

The argument regarding parties is incomplete because we haven't considered the role of the press, social media and lobbying companies in an instrumentalised political system dominated by parties. Even without political parties, people may form temporary associations to campaign for particular positions such as 'ban the bomb' and 'ban abortion'. Social media platforms and A.I. provide the clearest opportunity for such campaigns and targeted advertising. These may comprise forms of political instrumentalization that aren't based on parties. The question

is 'how may the line be drawn between campaigns that instrumentalise and those that don't?' A short answer is that, as soon as a group comes together with *the primary aim* that their proposal will win, consensus is lost or has gone astray. If their proposal doesn't pass, they would have been defeated, so they must have no interest in listening to other points of view, except as a way to better prepare for the next fight. Therefore, the preconditions of consensus-building are not in place. And if the group wins, someone else has been vanquished, and the aim that political processes shouldn't instrumentalise is lost. The views of the defeated have not been listened to, except as a means to discard them. Additionally, campaigns are fought with propaganda, which can be loosely characterised as the attempt to change people's desires and beliefs without trying to provide adequate reasons (Marlin, 2012; Stanley, 2015). This means they don't engage with or treat the person fully as an epistemological agent, as an equal, even if they pretend to. In conclusion, this type of political campaign would not belong in a participatory democracy.

Of course, this does not preclude the association of like-minded people for other primary aims such as understanding an approach to set of policy issues better and to clarify confusions. One litmus test for the difference is the willingness to change one's views, and another is the quality of one's listening to people who disagree with one. As we said earlier, it would be part of the political culture of such a democracy that one would seek to listen to people who have views very different from one's own in order to understand better.

Political Culture

In many parts of the world, the political culture is antagonistic, vindictive, and violent. It divides societies rather than building communities. It is mendacious, rather than finding truths. It feeds the wealthy, rather than being dedicated to the well-being of those in need. It tends to pay only lip-service to the claim that power should belong to the people. We have argued that the root of these toxic qualities is the instrumentalisation of people. The system encourages the manipulation of public opinion, the marginalization of minorities and the injustices of the *status quo* because it is designed mainly as an arena for gaining power.

Political culture consists largely of norms that generate practices and define as normal the function of key institutions in a political-economic structure. It is usually taken for granted. A large part of the difficulty we have in envisaging a participatory democracy is that we assume the hostile and manipulative political culture of the current system. Of course, this doesn't mean that people wouldn't instrumentalise each other in a non-instrumentalising political-economic system.

Rather, it means that we can free ourselves from the manipulation and oppression that is currently built into the roles and institutions that define the system. How can we so free ourselves? Precisely, by having the institutions in place that don't instrumentalise on a habitual basis. As we shall see, this instrumentalisation infects perhaps harmless looking roles such as that of citizen and politician, and taken-for-granted institutions such as the government and the state.

Individualism

A very important part of the culture of an instrumentalised political-economic system is individualism. Instrumentalising institutions are bound to generate individualistic views. Individualism is roughly the claim that the existence of individuals is primary, and that of social institutions is secondary, a construction out of the existence of individuals. According to this view, institutions are composed of or reducible to individuals. Although there are many forms of individualism, this is the core point (Thomson, 2016).

This core point can be rejected from two directions. First, it misunderstands institutions. Individualism requires that institutions should be conceived as a contract between the individuals who constitute the institution. However, this is a mistake: institutions aren't composed of individuals. An institution is roughly an organisation of roles, and the specification of the roles presupposes the irreducible existence of the institution itself. The reference to the institution cannot be eliminated or reduced, and therefore, the claims of individualism are false. Indeed, the very idea of a social contract contradicts individualism: contracts are only possible within the context of legal institutions. Even the act of promising is a social institution, whose existence defies the individualist thesis, namely that all claims about social institutions can be either eliminated or reduced to claims about individuals. In other words, social contract theory presupposes what it is supposed to explain. The same objection applies to any theory that tries to explain institutions as contracts between individuals.

Individualism is usually motivated by the apparent implausibility of its opposite, namely institutionalism. The idea is that some minimalistic form of individualism must be true because otherwise one would be committed to the existence of institutions as entities in their own right, which implies a totalitarian-type reification. The assertion that institutions exist and have interests quite apart from that of persons seems deeply mistaken. Therefore, individualism must be true.

However, this argument for individualism is itself an error. It is based on a false dichotomy. The main thesis of individualism is that claims about institutions are eliminable or are reducible, or that institutions are composed of individuals. But rejecting such theses doesn't imply that we must reify institutions and treat

them as entities in their own right, and *vice versa.* We aren't forced to accept one side of the dichotomy, individualism or institutionalism. We see a similar error in the philosophy of mind. The thesis that psychological statements aren't eliminable or reducible to neurological claims about brain-states doesn't imply that minds exist as distinct non-physical entities. Rejecting eliminativism and reductionism doesn't require Cartesian dualism (Thomson, 2018). Likewise, rejecting individualism doesn't require reifying institutions as if they were persons. Of course, institutions only exist insofar as persons perform the roles that define an institution. Institutions need role holders. But this dependency provides no support for individualism.

Furthermore, rejecting individualism doesn't require reifying institutions in the sense of thinking that they have non-derivative interests, which might conflict with those of individuals. A totalitarian would argue that institutions such as the state have interests that can override those of individuals. We can reject this without embracing individualism. Of course, institutions have interests, but they are not non-derivative. A company has an interest in winning a lawsuit or increasing the value of its assets, but it doesn't have well-being. Although statements about institutions are not reducible, nevertheless, the interests of an institution are necessarily derivative. We can avoid the reductive thesis about institutions without accepting the totalitarian view that institutions have non-derivative interests.

The second way individualism fails is in its understanding of particular persons. The alleged individuals don't exist. Of course, particular people do exist, and those persons may think of themselves as individuals. Nevertheless, individuals don't exist. This is because we aren't self-contained atoms: the well-being of all humans is relational. Our consciousness is linguistic and social; we live and work in institutions that aren't reducible to contracts. The idea that I am an individual is an illusion. This isn't the obvious affirmation that we depend materially on others and that we live in societies. The individualist, as exemplified by liberal political philosophy, can advocate the causal importance of the social in the lives of individuals. The mere fact that we depend on others and live in societies isn't a refutation of individualism (Hampton, 1997, Chapter 5). Rather what refutes individualism is that our being, and our well-being, is constituted relationally and socially.

Politically, the individualist maintains the ideal of autonomous self-government. In sharp contrast, we hold that, once it is stripped of individualism, the idea of autonomous self-government is simply that of non-instrumentalisation. Autonomy is simply agency, and respect for that agency is simply non-instrumentalisation. The idea of autonomy as self-governance conjures up the image of the ruler governing over their proper domain, which is themself, through the issue of commands. It is an internalisation of the picture of the monarch who within their proper province is answerable to no-one. Such an image is individualistic in

that the sovereign sits alone on the throne: they alone make their own decisions. Such an image is authoritarian because the king or queen supposedly has authority to make these decisions: they alone command! This is what Feinberg (1990, 84) calls: "the doctrine of the human right of autonomous self-government within the private sphere." Such an image is wedded to the concept of free-will, a willing that isn't dependent on anything else. This metaphor comes from Kant at his most Cartesian, when he apparently thinks of the will as a cause that is beyond the empirical world of mechanical and determining physical causation. There are many critical comments to make about these Cartesian strands in Kant, but what is important for now is: we don't need this Cartesian-like view to distinguish between reasons that are content-sensitive and physical causes that aren't. If I think that P is desirable and that action A will lead to P then there is, and I will have, a reason to perform A. Such reason descriptions are content-sensitive, or intensional or aspectual. In contrast, when a brick hits a window, the relevant causal descriptions are not content-sensitive.[51]

The claim that we are autonomous is an individualistic way of affirming that we are agents. We are agents means that we perform actions, we do things. As such, it is appropriate to characterize certain of our bodily movements as actions, in terms of content-sensitive reasons. The notion of agency doesn't require that of an inner sovereign or a free-will. It isn't individualistic. There is no idea of action equals free-willed, equals independent of everything else. There is no pure will, *ex nihilo.* It simply requires that the action can be truly characterised as such in terms of content-sensitive reasons, unlike the orbit of a planet and the falling of a stone.

Of course, horses and dogs also perform actions. One *might* want to reserve the term 'agency' for beings who are capable of exercising self-consciousness with respect to reasons for action. Nevertheless, even with this added restriction, this doesn't exclude horses and dogs from agency, given an important condition from the philosophy of animal-minds. This condition is simply that the difference between being self-conscious and not is one of degree. Furthermore, it is also multi-dimensional. The difference is not even between shades of grey, but it consists in a wide gamut of different capabilities that constitute being self-conscious (Bermúdez 1998 and Dennett 1997). While this makes the ascription of content to the mental states of dogs and horses nuanced and complex, it does so in a way that makes 'the ruler on the throne' or autonomy conception of agency too simplistic. Agency is not all or nothing autonomy. We perform actions that are habitual, that scarcely aware of, under the influence of many factors. Sometimes, our actions are more like those of horses and dogs than we might care to admit!

51 They are extensional.

It is often complained that non-individualistic conceptions of the social yield mistaken notions of responsibility, which provide unwarranted excuses for immoral individual actions. Roughly, the complaint is that, for instance, when a person from a deprived neighbourhood steals from someone, their social conditions don't excuse their action, and that according to the erroneous non-individualist views, they would. There are several issues haunting such debates. One is the need to distinguish between reasons and causes. Descriptions of an agent's actions in terms of reasons won't capture the causes of those actions. To assert that an action has causes isn't to deny it was an action performed by the agent. We can describe the social causes of people's behaviour without denying the actions were indeed actions. To what extent they mitigate is a quite different issue. Another concern is the retributive conception of justice, which automatically equates responsibility with blame and punishment for its own sake. In short, shorn of these misconceptions, a non-individualistic conception of the social doesn't necessarily excuse immoral actions. Given this defence and the earlier caveats, the claim that we are autonomous beings can be replaced with the idea that we are agents.

The main root of participatory democracy is that we are agents. When we the authors claim that any other form of governance instrumentalises persons, this entails that non-participatory systems do not fully recognise or respect the agency of all. Such a claim does not depend on an individualized conception of autonomy. Being liberated from this conception means that we can appeal to considerations about the nature of communities and institutions. It allows us to think about the structures of society.

The conception of individual autonomy as self-governance unfortunately plagues the otherwise excellent work of Cristina Lafont (2019). She claims that the need for participatory democracy is based on self-governance rather than equality. In contrast, we argue that self-governance is at root the non-instrumentalisation of agency, and that the principle of non-instrumentalisation requires a notion of equality that representative democracy contravenes. The need for participatory democracy is based on equality. A representative system isn't fully democratic because it requires a distinction between ruler and ruled, which violates the equal non-instrumental value of persons. This is quite a different claim from the assertion that we are individually like monarchs ruling over ourselves. Perhaps, these differences seem abstract and obscure. But, really, they are not because a political philosophy based on individual autonomy cannot recognise the non-reductive importance of community. And hence, it will not characterise consensus correctly. In crude terms, it cannot distinguish well between a collection of individuals and a community. It cannot distinguish between agreement of the former and consensus of the latter.

Furthermore, a political philosophy based on individual autonomy cannot recognise the relational nature of well-being, and it will fall into the pit of conceiving well-being in terms of self-interest conceived economically. It is a mistake to conceive of well-being individualistically, in terms of pure self-interest or as a set of self-directed desires or pleasures. Such conceptions necessarily instrumentalise all relations. Under such an atomistic view, one's relationship to others isn't part of one's well-being; it is only an instrumental means to well-being. In opposition to this individualistic conception, it is part of our well-being to be in relations with others, and this isn't reducible to pleasure caused or desires satisfied. The same points apply to living in a community. It is part of our human way of being to live in communities, in which people share their lives together. This implies that we cannot reduce this aspect of well-being to subjective questions such as 'Do people value living in communities?' and to causal questions such as 'Do people feel happier when they live in communities?' These questions are indeed pertinent. But they do not even touch the idea that living in a community is a constituent *part* of our well-being. In more metaphorical language, what is most important in our lives is the lives of others. We live outside of ourselves. Individualism gets this all wrong. In terms of political culture, this is a terrible mistake!

In the context of much European and North American thinking, individualism is partly a historical reaction against the serf-like dependencies of feudalism. It is also a reaction to the more recent totalitarian underpinnings of soviet-style communism. Both of these reactions recognise the agency of individual persons and the value primacy of the well-being of individual humans. But, we don't need to be caught in these historical false dichotomies. Individualism cannot understand the non-reductive nature of institutions and the relation character of human well-being.

Competition

The current political culture is antagonistically competitive in part because it portrays social institutions primarily as a gladiator space for individuals to fight each other for their self-interest. It is as if we cannot move beyond the Hobbesian conception of human interaction. Such a picture is untrue for many reasons. Being individualistic, it fails to distinguish material and instrumental self-interest from non-instrumental well-being. Not being able to recognise the non-reductive nature of communities and the relational nature of well-being, it is fatally unable to appreciate how our being together is valuable-in-itself.

This book isn't the place to outline the empirical evidence for the claim that living in a competitive society is harmful. In any case, such studies don't provide

unambiguous evidence. They tend to presuppose a non-relational conception of harm. Furthermore, we do not have clear instances of non-competitive societies, apart from the pre-industrial, for an empirical comparison. Thus, the empirical evidence will help only indirectly to imagine post-industrial age societies that aren't based on competitive conceptions of society. 'Post-industrial' doesn't mean that globally there is no industrialised manufacturing! Indeed such a global economy is probably impossible. Nevertheless, we can sketch some of the ways in which living in a competitive society is harmful to persons. For instance, people suffer anxiety and loneliness; they feel a sense of inadequacy, insecurity and the opposite, arrogance. In the final analysis, these various harms amount to the following: humans need non-instrumentalised relations with each other, and being and doing together are non-instrumental goods. A competitive society doesn't recognise these non-instrumental relational aspects of well-being. At its best, it provides spaces for the fair competition between *individuals* for the promotion of their *derivative* self-interest.

Instrumentalisation is necessarily oriented towards goal-achievement, which includes conceiving life primarily in terms of setting and attaining goals for oneself. According to this view, the goals confer value on the actions that attempt to achieve them. However, this constitutes an instrumentalisation of one's life because it defines the value of an activity *primarily* as an instrumental means to a set of goals (Thomson, Gill and Goodson, 2020). Competitive goal-achievement adds a new layer to this tragic portrayal. Social discourse and self-understanding are dominated by terms such as winning, getting ahead, not being left behind, success, social climbing and advancement, where the relevant goals are defined in terms of doing better than others. Such conception harms our well-being in several ways. It can overtake one's sense of self-worth, which is increasingly defined in terms of achievement and social status. It tends to replace dignity with monetary success and recognisable social status. Because of this, some people can feel worthless, and others full of arrogant pride. Neither of these two extremes count as being connected to one's dignity or self-worth as a person; they substitute status and the perceptions of others for the intimate self-recognition of one's valuable nature as a person. Furthermore, neither of these two extremes allow for congenial relations with others.

Political philosophies that explain justice in terms what people *deserve* fall into this trap. The concept of what people deserve makes sense primarily in a competitive individualistic culture, which assumes that society is first and foremost a domain in which people morally should get rewarded or punished for their actions *as individuals*. Such a view is usually accompanied by the claim that what people deserve, they have a right to. Given this, political philosophies that express social relations in terms of rights assume that society is primarily an arena for antago-

nistically competitive relations between individuals.[52] These versions of individualism are antagonistically competitive, and are inherently unpeaceful and, therefore, not conducive to non-instrumentalised well-being.

One popular objection to the view we are advocating is that political competition is healthy because it promotes better policies and hence well-being. Competition in the political field is necessary for improvement. In support of this objection, thinkers contend that competition is necessary in economies and, for similar reasons, also in the field of politics. This objection falls apart for several reasons. First, the analogy between economics and politics is misleading. When companies compete in markets by reducing prices to increase their market share, the competition isn't regarding propositional content; it doesn't concern what is true. In contrast, in the political field, the competition is largely comprised of claims to truth, and the idea that one needs to win a battle to encounter truth is like proposing knightly combat as an investigative method. Communities cannot discover truths by fighting, for example, by funding campaigns to manipulate each other's opinions. Second, better policies don't require competition; they need collaborative discussions which build on misunderstandings to find consensus. While people have genuine disagreements, these are best resolved by the community having a common aim of trying to understand together the issues they face. This requires social relations of respect, trust and good will, as opposed to the antagonisms that lead to instrumentalisation. Third, political competition is a good compared to repressive regimes that demand obedience and conformity to doctrine. This doesn't comprise a refutation of the claim that non-antagonistic, peaceful processes are better still.

One counter-reply would be that, in the political field, there are conflicts of interest that are akin to the economic, and that, with respect to them, we need competition. However, in reply to this counter, we rejected a variant of this objection when we argued that agonism was inadequate. Drawing on this earlier discussion, one can distinguish different senses of 'competition'. On the one hand, competition is inevitable in that conflicts of self-interest are inescapable. On the other hand, competition as antagonistic social relations isn't inevitable or desirable. Antagonistic social relations necessarily instrumentalise, and they quickly escalate. Consequently, the answer to the objection is that these two different hands need to be kept apart: the political system needs to be designed so that conflicts of *derivative* self-interest do not undermine relational and community *non-derivative* well-being. Competition in the first sense doesn't require it in the second sense.

The argument so far has transformed antagonistic competition between political parties to conflicts of interests between equals in a participatory peaceful

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52 See Karl Marx's entitled: *On the Jewish Question.*

space. The idea of this transformation is to avoid the weaponisation of political processes and its subsequent instrumentalisations. Once the institutions of political parties have been replaced, we are free to envisage political processes that are non-competitive and that embody peaceful social relations. These processes help generate a culture that embodies the four principles outlined in the first chapter. The on-going practices of consensus-building will help maintain a culture that sets these principles as default norms.

A Decentralised System

In most countries, the current representative governance system is centralised. Members of the national parliament or Congress are elected directly. Typically, regional autonomy, which is limited to specific policy domains and areas of service provision, is something that is granted by the national. Local and regional governments function within the legislative, regulative and budgetary constraints imposed by the national. A top-down system means that:

> a clear sense of hierarchy is baked into the relationship between central government and its local and devolved dependents, realised primarily through the centre's control over the allocation of local funding (Newman and Kenny, 2023, 22).

Furthermore, local and regional policies have no direct impact on the national. The laws that regulate regional and local politics are decided at national level independently of the local and regional assemblies. Therefore, the system *centralises* power. This point isn't negated by inter-governmental cooperation on specific projects (Teles, 2016).

Although members of local and regional assemblies are elected directly by voters, this isn't necessarily a more democratic arrangement, as we shall now argue. In effect, there is a triplicate representative system, which voters directly elect national, regional and local representatives. This means that there is the resulting instrumentalisation at each level, as shown earlier. In a representative system, people's political engagement is largely restricted to voting for rulers. As already pointed out, this system typically instrumentalises and is itself instrumentalised because all power is concentrated on one specific junction point, namely the act of voting. Prior to the election, there are campaigns to influence the vote which amount to manipulation, and, after the vote, the resulting mandate leaves sections of the population alienated for the remaining electoral period. In short, if voting is supposed to replace consensus-building processes, it is a woefully inadequate substitute. This is because the process of voting for representatives relies on dividing

the political power of the people. Each person votes independently of everyone else. Of course, in one sense, this is good: no one should be coerced to vote one way or another. Indeed, this is precisely the reason why in a non-instrumentalised system, there would not be political campaigns and adverts. However, the case in point isn't about that. It is rather that, in a representative system, people vote as if they were individuals, without engagement within the communities they belong to. Each is on their own without the institutional spaces for listening to, sharing with, and learning from others. Everyone loses the wisdom of the group and the opportunity to help ameliorate that wisdom.

This division is built into the design of the system. It splinters the power of the people into millions of individual fragments rather than coalescing it into one unified voice. This means that, in such a system, the rulers rule by dividing, albeit that they are elected and albeit that this isn't deliberate. When the voice of the people speaks as one, there cannot be rulers. When the voice of the people is broken into a million soundbites, the rulers have the dominant voice. When the design of the system is such that the voice of the people must always remain fragmented, the system itself divides and instrumentalises, even though it does so by default. By not having the institutional spaces for listening and for consensus-building, such arrangements necessarily favour and make possible the ruling classes. In conclusion, the very design of the representative system means that the people are ruled and their voice is thereby ruled out.

These points indicate the ways in which a triple representative system is undemocratic. A system in which voters directly elect national, regional and local representatives will be less democratic than a well-designed participatory system. For this reason, we shall propose a framework for a decentralised alternative that is based on the conclusions of earlier chapters. Such a system would be more democratic because it is designed to be non-instrumentalising, respectful, peaceful and serving the well-being of all. It is organised to coalesce rather than fragment the power of the people.

In the current system, members of the national assembly are not responsible to the regional, and regional assembly members are not responsible to the local assemblies. In contrast, we propose that the national should be responsible to the regional who is responsible to the local. Broadly speaking, in this new proposal, local assemblies undertake consensus-building processes which result in meta-policy decisions, some of which will pertain to policies at regional and national levels. Each of these local assemblies appoint a delegate to a regional assembly, who will engage with the delegates from other local assemblies to reach a regional consensus. In turn, these regional assemblies appoint delegates to the national assembly to engage with other regional assemblies in the formation of a national consensus. In short, we propose a nested system of delegates who come to decisions based on

local consensus processes. In this proposal, regional assemblies only have decision-making power because local assemblies do, and the regional are constituted by the local assemblies. Likewise, with the regional and national. Regional and national assemblies are simply ways to organise the associations of local assemblies.

In such a system, power belongs to the people, and the power of the people is augmented and strengthened by the assemblies at each level. To repeat, the national assembly is responsible to the regionals, and the regionals to the locals, who are the people. This chain of responsibility replaces the direct election of representatives at each of the three levels. This arrangement removes the instrumentalisation inherent in elections by voting. It thereby sidesteps the assumption that national delegates are more important and more powerful than regional ones. The system is established by the people for the people. This means that its function is in part to avoid that the power of the people is divided or fragmented so that some political group or party can capture it. Rather the decentralised system is designed and established to heighten and enhance the power of the people.

This decentralised organisation is a participatory delegate system. It would be a better arrangement than a representative one because the chain of responsibility is rooted in listening. In other words, the main function of the national assembly is to listen to the regional consensuses, and that of the regional is to listen to the collective decisions of the local assemblies. Through the regional and national assemblies (*inter alia*), local assemblies can listen to and interact with each other. Insofar as the relations are defined in these terms, power will remain with the people.

The assemblies at different levels are ways to organise the relevant consensus-building processes, and their accompanying dialogues. Consequently, the national assembly does not give orders or instructions to the regionals and so on. Rather, it will build policy by listening to what they say. The regional assembly is a space for groupings of local assemblies to interact and discuss issues with each other, directly or through delegates. Likewise, the national assembly is a space for the regional ones to discuss with each other and come to consensus-based collective decisions.

A Delegate System

For the proposed system to make sense, the role of a delegate has to be significantly different from that of a representative. We have already indicated why it is. The delegate's function is mainly to bring the understanding reached by the local assembly to the regional. In contrast, a representative is an elected ruler who represents a set of policies determined by a party with vested interests and which are chosen by a manipulated set of voters among a paltry set of alternatives.

At each level, we must retain the distinction between the roles and functions of different people, including those of delegate, facilitator, member of the council, and official. In each case, the role-holders are responsible to the assembly that appoints them. Currently, in British national politics, ministers serve at least three of these four roles, and, in this way, power is concentrated. If, instead, these roles and functions were split between different people who have the relevant distinct qualities and capacities, then the power would remain vested in the relevant assemblies rather in its appointees. In this way, the delegation of function can enhance the power of the people as a whole rather than detracting power from them.

In earlier chapters, we argued that a representational system of governance instrumentalises. We now argue that the proposal to send delegates from local to regional and national assemblies is significantly better in three ways.

Power

First and foremost, the difference pertains to power. In a participatory system, the role of the delegate is defined by the power of the people, and not by that of a political party and those who control it. In the proposed system, the delegate is empowered directly by the assembly, the people. By contrast, in a representative system, the power resides primarily with the political parties who propose candidates, create platforms for election, and seek funding to bolster the campaign and to influence the vote. The power relations in the two cases are totally different. In a representative system, power is taken away from the people and transferred to the elected representatives through consent, which is of course manipulable and fabricable. In contrast, in a participatory system, the delegates are agents of the local communities, and thereby their role extends and expands the power of the people. The local communities acquire voice and strength through their interaction with each other. The role of delegates is to enable this to be present at the regional assembly.

These points reflect that one cannot delegate power, only function. This means that the liberal social contract as originally presented by Hobbes and Locke is misconceived. It is an error to envisage society as a social contract between people to form a government. It is a mistake to portray such an agreement as relinquishing of power. The alternative is to conceive it as a delegation of functions. This means that the principle of institutional design is that the people retain power; and appoint specific persons to designated roles to amplify that power rather than reduce it. This difference in design principle is underpinned by two distinct conceptions of power. In the work of Hobbes, the power of A is defined in terms of the capacity of A to decide for others, B. A has power *over* B,and any increase in A's power comes

as a result of the diminution of B's power. In contrast, in Spinoza-like view, power is defined by aggregation or aggregative capacity: A doesn't have power *over* B, but A and B together have greater power than A and B having power separately. With greater power, A and B can do more together.[53] Obviously, 'more' needs to be specified in terms of performance given the relevant evaluative criteria. This Spinozian notion of aggregative power might be mistakenly associated with a totalitarian conception of institutions: if A and B acquire more power synergistically then this can only be because they have abandoned their individuality to some new totality AB. But this misleading line of objection plays into the false dichotomy 'either individualism or collectivism', which we argued against earlier.

In accordance with this general point, the assembly designates various functions to councillors, facilitators, officials and delegates, but it does not depute responsibility nor power. This means that the assembly, and only the assembly, makes the decision whether to accept the recommendations and actions of officials, delegates, councillors and facilitators, as well as appointed sub-committees, and so forth. Of course, delegates, officials, councillors and facilitators are responsible for performing their roles or functions well, but this would not diminish the power of the people and responsibility of the assembly. On the contrary, it will augment that power in the Spinozian sense as we just illustrated, by enabling the community to do more by being better organised. Of course, articulating this general design principle doesn't show how it will be implemented in any specific case.

Nevertheless, this principle highlights a fundamental difference between a representative and a delegate with respect to power. The power of the people can be expressed in a variety of institutional ways. For example, local assemblies in the region, and regional assemblies across the country, can meet together to reach a deeper understanding of each other's approaches with respect to issues. Regional facilitators can recommend informal inter-local meetings that anticipate problems at the regional level. When differences of understanding are persistent and deep, the local assemblies may ask for *ad hoc* meetings between different local assemblies within the region or even between regions. Local assemblies can establish cross-municipal mini-republics on specific issues. Or, for example, in the case of divisive issues, the local assembly can ask several of its members to also attend the regional meeting, in addition to its delegate.

53 Obviously, 'more' needs to be specified in terms of performance given the relevant evaluative criteria. This Spinozian notion of aggregative power might be mistakenly associated with a totalitarian conception of institutions: 'if A and B acquire more power synergistically then this can only be because they have abandoned their individuality to some new totality AB.' This association is a misleading line of objection that plays into the false dichotomy of individualism or collectivism, which we argued against in Chapter 2.

The delegate needn't be a single person and nor the same person for all issues. For some discussions, the local assembly may ask for a number of people to be their delegate, or they may consider that person A is better at understanding and arguing for the community consensus regarding issue X than is person B. Additionally, the delegation at regional meetings will report back regularly to the local assembly, and is responsible for explaining how the local consensus was modulated by the discussions at the regional level. In short, the system can be designed in such a manner that power remains with the people, and the delegate-function respects this constitutional feature. It is so designed by the people, and not by someone else. The operational relations between the delegates and the assembly should embody the fact that power resides with the local assemblies, with the people.

Listening

Second, delegates are fundamentally different from representatives in terms of role. Representatives do not have the primary function of listening to the constituency community that they represent, nor of engaging in dialogue with the community, nor of understanding and explaining the consensus of the constituency. The representative is elected by a majority vote under the banner of a set of policy or strategic positions predefined by a party. And pity to those who didn't vote for this package! The mandate is already fixed, and there is no directive to engage in discussion and to form consensus, independent of this party-defined package.

In sharp contrast, within the proposed participatory system, the delegate has the triple role of presenting the local consensus to the region and the regional consensus back to the local, and of participating in the regional consensus-building processes on behalf of the local assembly. These roles assume that this regional process is consensus-based, and that it will seek what is best for the well-being of the region. The delegates aren't representing the interests of their assembly. Rather they are coalescing the understanding of the local and that of the regional.

No doubt, this means that the dynamics of consensus-building at the regional level will be distinct from that of any local assembly. Likewise, the synergies of the consensus-building at the national level will be distinct from that of any regional assembly. This listening function is not passive: a regional delegate at national level must understand well the consensus of the regions other than their own and communicate them clearly. The regional delegate must enable their region to engage with those other regions, in the first instance through interaction with the regional delegate. They must be able to say to the region things like: "Many other parts of

the country see the issue differently from how we do because …" and "we need to include this perspective in our understanding because …".

Trust

Third, the proposed consensus-oriented system is based on trust rather than accountability (O'Neill, 2002b). The delegates are well briefed by their local assemblies, but they are trusted to fulfil their function. Such trust is built on relationships. As we explained, the delegate reports back to the assembly after the regional meeting, and if the local assembly feels betrayed by its delegate, then they will hold meetings to explain why and to try to resolve the situation. In these, the local assembly needs to separate the substantive issues from the relationships of trust. To mix these up in discussion would be an error: discursive substantive debriefing is one thing; renewing and deepening trust is another.

Because the power relations and functions are different, the trust that a delegate should receive is different from the accountability of a representative. The delegate should understand well the consensus of the local community, as well as the forces and tensions that make up that consensus. At the same time, the delegate has to be able to bring this consensus into a new process in a way that respects both the wisdom of the local consensus and the distinctive nature of the regional process. This understanding of the delegate's role will be written into the job-description and must be part of the trust that the community has laid upon its delegate. This means that the trust is in the person's good will and understanding. This is quite different from the accountability that a representative would comply with. A representative is first and foremost accountable to the party for the policies that it was elected on and, within those constraints, to the electorate as a whole within the constituency that he or she represents.

It might be argued that a weakness of the proposed system is that it depends on an unreliable iteration of this trust relation. For instance, the local assembly trusts that its delegate will choose well the relevant role-holders at the regional level. It must trust the regional delegate to contribute well to a regional process that results in the selection of a trustworthy national delegate. At each stage in this process, the role of the delegate is to convey the consensus from their local assembly and to ensure that this consensus forms an active ingredient in the consensus-building process at the next level. However, in practice, local assemblies may be dissatisfied with their national delegates as appointed by the regional assemblies. In which case, the trust relation wouldn't be successfully iterated. So goes the objection.

In reply, the reliance on trust is a strength rather than a weakness. It defines a set of social relations that have been built and enriched over time and, as such, they are more profound and resilient than normal political associations. As O'Neill (2002b) says, trust is a more solid relation than one based on accountability. The local assembly will have met on a regular basis with their delegate. Most people in the assembly will have participated in deep dialogues with this person. This means that the members of the assembly will understand the delegate's strengths and limitations, and they will be able to see the delegate's goodwill. The relationship will not be a political one in the usual sense of the term: it will not be like the relation between an MP or congressperson and their constituency. Instead, the delegate is a part of the community, and their function is to carry the voice and communicate about the local assembly's consensus at the next level.

When there are contentions, and if the new regional consensus is significantly different from that of the local assembly, there will be debriefing meetings. In these, the delegate would present how the regional consensus was reached, and why it has departed from that of the local assembly. After all, the delegate was privy to a distinct regional consensus-building process that the members of local assembly did not experience. It would be unreasonable for them to expect that the regional assemblies would reproduce their local agreement, but it would not be unreasonable for them to expect their delegate to have made this locally-built understanding an important input into the regional synergy.

This is why the local assembly must trust its delegate. The delegated is empowered to act as delegate and not as a representative of a set of local interests or predefined policy positions. What does this trust amount to? There are at least two kinds of trust involved: one is related to goodwill and the other pertaining to ability. The community might mistrust the ability of the delegate to present the sense of the local consensus at a regional meeting. They might feel that the delegate has not articulated the core points of the local consensus well. Trust amounts to believing of the delegate that 'no one else in the community could have done a significantly and consistently better job of …' In short, they must trust the delegate's good judgment. The trust concerning the goodwill of the delegate amounts to a conviction that 'This person works to present the consensus of our community to the region fairly and reports back to us truthfully and the delegate will not put their self-interest above this role.'

At each level, the relations between the relevant role-holders and the assembly relies on a continuing trust, rather than on an election. This means that the assembly can always call a special meeting when it feels that the relevant trust has been breached or undermined. It means that the assembly can ask the delegate to change their practice, or the assembly can appoint others to the role.

Replies To Objections

Within a participatory democracy, we can imagine that there will be a tendency towards the decentralisation of policies and taxation. Nevertheless, national laws will continue to provide an overall framework for the working of local and regional assemblies. Clearly, there will be a need for regional and national services, policies and legislation. This brings the difficult question of how the many local assemblies can work together and make decisions at regional and national level, in accordance with the outlined principles.

There are several difficulties. At the local level, the discussion is direct, person to person, but the local assembly as a whole cannot directly participate in the deliberations of regional assemblies. This may lead to misunderstandings that cause alienation. Suppose a local assembly has worked hard to reach a consensus on some issue, and suppose now they find that at the regional level, the emerging consensus is quite different. The local delegate at the regional level meetings will encounter points of view, arguments and understandings quite different from those developed in the local assembly. This may give rise to mistrust of the regional, which will also be directed to other local assemblies. In such situations, local members will complain that the new regional consensus is not in keeping with the spirit of the decisions reached in the local assembly, and they will feel that their deliberations and work have been discarded or ignored. How can we avoid perceived instrumentalisation of the local process by the regional?

This difficulty is accentuated when people of different groups are geographically concentrated. If the wealthy live in some areas and the poor in others, and if communities are divided on racial lines, then consensus on a regional level will be additionally harder to achieve than on a local level. When a local assembly reaches consensus about some issue, their common understanding won't always be similar to that of other local assemblies.

For example, we can imagine that there might be some general consensus with respect to a range of issues among local assemblies in a city such as Quibdó in the department of Choco in Colombia. We also might expect there to be significant differences between the local rural municipalities and the urban ones in this region. Nevertheless, we can imagine that the misunderstandings behind these differences can be overcome through ad hoc regional assembly and inter-local meetings. In other words, the various urban assemblies might agree to meetings with the delegates from local rural assemblies specifically established for discussing various policy issues. In part, this is imaginable because Choco is currently a marginalised region and, in some regards, the interests of the region would be opposed to the centralised policies of Bogota. So, we should expect

rural and urban assemblies within Choco to agree to some policy priorities in opposition to those of the centre of the country.

Would this opposition-based solidarity survive discussions at the national level with other very different regions of the country? The regional assemblages of these local assemblies will send delegates to the national level assembly at which they will probably encounter understandings quite different from their own, and from those of the assemblies for which they are delegates. However, the delegates will know this, and so will their assemblies, and so together, they will try to find recommendations and policy decisions that can find consensus. Therefore, these are not insurmountable problems.

Of course, regional and national assemblies and their respective councils will often anticipate the need for *ad-hoc* inter-local and inter-regional assemblies to discuss specific issues. Local assemblies will anticipate that their understanding will be only one contributing factor in the understanding built at the regional assembly, because the synergies of the consensus-building process will be distinct. This means that their delegates won't have a fixed set of views that they are supposed to represent at regional level, where the panorama of interests and the optic of understandings will be different. The local delegates at regional level are supposed to find an understanding, a consensus, with regard to the meta-policy decisions that are best for the well-being of the region as a whole. Local assemblies cannot reasonably expect that their consensus about this regional well-being will coincide with that of the regional assembly itself. Likewise, with the regional assemblies and the national. Despite this kind of flexibility built into the role of a delegate, the relationship of trust must not be broken, and there must be established the relevant dialogue spaces to ensure that it isn't or that when it is, it can be restored.

In summary, there are serious difficulties associated with regional assemblies. As with earlier discussions, these problems can be taken in two different ways. One is that the problems are precisely that: difficulties that need to be solved in the design and working of the participatory system. Such an approach accepts the argument that a participatory democracy would function without instrumentalising and thereby constitutes a better governance system than a representative one. The other is to claim that these problems constitute an argument against a participatory system because they are intractable, or are too difficult and costly to overcome that they can be treated as insoluble. The reply to these objections is that there is no good reason to think that such problems cannot be overcome, given the three preconditions of a participatory system: respect, trust and goodwill and if the relevant participatory institutions are in place. This general reply assumes what we have already argued, namely that delegation is significantly different from representation. The proposed participatory system transcends the instrumentalisation inherent in a representative system.

Chapter 6
The Design of National Institutions and Political Cultures

Suppose that the reader is convinced that community assemblies constitute a plausible model of good governance at the local level. Nevertheless, this seems a long distance from the claim that the proposals provide a framework for a credible alternative governance system for a whole country. The argument for this more radical claim is the subject-matter of this chapter.

In the course of this argument, we will make some tentative schematic suggestions about how national institutions might function in a decentralised participatory democracy. In particular, we shall show that, instead of seeking to attain power for governing the people, these institutions can be designed to maintain and sustain the power of the people. We will briefly show how the outlined proposal constitutes a reframing of the concepts of a national government and of a state.

Reframing National Government

Roughly, a government is a group of people whose role is to govern the people in a given territory on behalf of the state. Let's unpack this definition, starting with the notion of governing. We will examine the last part of the definition later.

As we have seen, the current conception of democracy accepts the assumption that there is a group who governs the vast of majority of the population. It requires that this governing group should be elected. It further proposes a three-way division of function, i.e. the legislative, executive and judiciary. The purpose of such division is to 'distribute power', ensure 'checks and balances' and prevent any one branch of the government or any single person from being the supreme ruler. According to this design, no person should be a member of more than one branch, and none of these branches may exercise the power of the other.

The term 'government' is sometimes restricted to the second of these roles: those who have the duty to propose legislation to an assembly and who are responsible for implementing policies agreed by the assembly. Within a centralised governance system, the term 'governing group' would also include the assemblies, such as a house of representatives, or a congress pr parliament. Although each representative seemingly serves the function of a spokesperson for their constituency, nevertheless, they are part of a group of people who occupy the roles of governing

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the people, albeit that they are elected and subject to law. As we already argued, the government is a group of elected rulers. While this is much better than having unelected rulers, it isn't as good as having no rulers.

Currently, with some exceptions, a representative democratic system usually functions roughly as follows. The political party or coalition that wins a general election has a majority in the house or parliament or congress. In proportional representative systems, there needn't be an overall majority. There are three main functions of the parliamentary institution: to pass legislation, to agree a proposed budget and to oversee the actions of the government. The political party which wins a general election also forms a government which consists of various ministerial roles, which run various ministries that are composed of non-political civil servants. The various ministries are typically concerned with: defense, health, education, welfare benefits and state pensions, law courts, police, transport, immigration, energy, environment, food, business and industry, trade, communication, as well as the treasury. In the UK, at the national level, there are 23 ministerial departments, 20 non-ministerial departments and 422 agencies and public bodies, which includes the Bank of England.[54] The various ministers are appointed by the president or prime minister usually from within the membership of the governing party, and sometimes also from the members of the national assembly. In many countries, the ministers appointed by the president are not members of the national assembly. This clearer separation of policy and executive roles is recommendable.

We propose that, from the members of the national assembly, which is entirely composed of delegates from the regionals, the assembly would appoint a small number of their members to serve on the national council. This process would be akin to the appointment of members to local and regional councils, and the function of each of the councils would be similar. The members of the council would not have a specialized executive role, as government ministers currently do. In the current system, ministers have at least three roles: they are part of the general policy-making process as members of a cabinet; they are the heads of the ministerial department; and as such they are responsible for overseeing the work of the ministry to the assembly. This mixes up policy and execution.

Under the proposed system, the distinction between policy and execution would be more strict. Executive appointments would not be political. This implies that there would be no ministers. The national council would be charged with the function of elaborating policies based on the decisions of the assembly (which is in turn based on those of the regionals etc.). This council is, hence, a policy and super-

54 https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations

visory body, and not an executive one like most government cabinets. The members of the council are appointed by the assembly from among themselves.

The chief operating officer of the national council, who would not be a voting member, would be appointed by the council. In existing political systems, presidents or prime ministers are elected by popular vote, and this is often thought to be part of the essence of democracy. We have argued that it isn't the case. Of course, it is better to have an elected chief executive or prime minister than a dictator. However, the current system has at least four deficiencies in terms of democracy.

First, one needs to separate the facilitator's role from that of the CEO or COO. Often, with the current roles of national president and prime minister, various functions are merged into one person, but they should be distinct, and they require different qualities. The facilitator has to chair and run the council and assembly meetings, and this special professional role needs to be that of an official. The role of facilitator is not that of a policy-maker nor that of a delegate of the policy makers. Also, the COO is also not a policy-maker or a delegate. She coordinates the implementation of the policy, which is divided into different departments, and is answerable to the council. Clearly, this person should not act as the chair of the council and the assembly because she is responsive to these bodies. In sum, the chairperson should be a professional facilitator rather than a politician or even a delegate. This role should be separate from that of the COO. The separation of these roles helps to dissolve the concentration of political power into the hands of one person; it marks a clearer working distinction between policy and executive.

Secondly, one of the most important roles is currently decided by one of the crudest appointment processes, namely popular election. The first point helps us see that the COO doesn't need to be appointed by general election. Deciding such an important role by election counts as a weakness of representative democracy because the qualities needed to win a general election are not those required for the role and responsibility of the COO. Additionally, the person who fills the COO role needs to be trustworthy and honest in a way that contradicts the salesmanship and PR stunt performativity required to win elections. In sum, the current appointment process is almost guaranteed to yield persons who are less qualified for the job. From this point of view, the COO should be appointed by the national council as we have proposed. The national council is more capable to appoint a suitable person using a set of well thought-out criteria and from a much wider and diverse pool of candidates.

Thirdly, in the current system, the general election of a CEO (prime minister or president) is designed to be an instrumentalised process. The name of the game is for one political party to *fight and defeat* another through any legal means possible

and with all the funds they can raise. This counts as a major weakness of representative democracy – that requires the engineering of divisiveness and a promotion of hostility and antagonism.

Fourth, appointment by general election is not necessarily more democratic. We have just seen that power is usually concentrated in one person by fusing the role that of facilitator and that of the CEO, even though these two functions are distinct, requiring quite different qualities. This concentration or fusion is part of what makes the role that of the national leader in the pejorative sense of the term. By the phrase 'pejorative sense', we mean leadership such that in one person being a leader, the rest of us are the led or followers. The word 'leader' in this sense of the term implies that those who are led are passive and don't know where to go, like sheep that need herding or steering, at least in this respect. It suggests the very instrumentalisation that we have been at pains to avoid.

Currently, this leadership is accentuated by popular election in a manner that detracts from democracy. When the leader is appointed directly by the people and this means that is responsible directly only to the people, therefore she can bypass both the national assembly and the national council. In a more democratic system, the COO would be directly responsive to the national council and assembly; her work would depend on them. Thus, these are the institutions that should appoint the COO. Under the proposed conditions, the COO would not be a leader in the pejorative sense of the term in that she would be responsive directly to the policies established by the council. In crude terms, under the current system, when anointed by popular election, the CEO (i. e. the president or prime minister) could argue: "I am appointed by the electorate, and it is to them that I am responsible." However, the electorate are divided and busy with other matters; this is why, in our proposal, people should delegate this function to the council, and this is why the COO should be appointed by national council and not by popular election.

As already mentioned, we propose that the national assembly would appoint a small number of their members (who are entirely composed of delegates from the regionals) to serve on a national council. This process would be akin to the appointment of members to local and regional councils, and the function of each of the councils would be similar, as outlined in Chapter 4. The members of the national council would not have a specialised executive role, as government ministers currently do.

In the proposed system, the national institutions would be similar to the typical local council organisations within the current system, albeit with some significant differences. For example, in the UK, there are 21 county councils, 164 district councils and 9,000 town councils. In the current governance system, often, local officials are not affiliated with a political party, even though the mayor usually is. That is, the managers who are charged with organising certain locally-provided

services, such as street lighting and rubbish disposal, are not political appointments, and the local system works regardless which political party is in power. In the current local system, the mayor or CEO works directly with the executive officials in charge of these different functions. In other words, in a local government, the people responsible for various services and offices are not elected, and need not be elected. These might include services for education, public utility, taxation, children and families, housing, police, and courts. In this way, under the existing system, municipal governance typically is not as politicised as the national government, and this indicates how national politics can be less instrumentalised and hostile.

In a participatory democratic system, the COO would be directly responsive to the national council and assembly. The COO role would be delegated to them by these institutions, and thus the COO would be appointed by these institutions. Under these proposed conditions, the COO would not be a leader in the pejorative sense of the term, in that he or she would be responsive directly for implementing the policies established by the council. This arrangement is more democratic because it helps avoid that power is concentrated in one person.

National Policy Implementation

The direct appointment of the COO by the national council allows the council to be in constant dialogue with the COO. The meaning and impact of any policy decision is in its execution and implementation. Thus the formulation of policy ought to take into account practical difficulties of implementation that would not be foreseen by policy made in a vacuum. This indicates that the political process can be portrayed in a simplified and preliminary form as a three-way interchange between meta-policy, policy and implementation. As discussed in Chapter 5, the assemblies define the relevant meta-policy; the councils and their non-executive officials formulate and articulate policy based on this; and the executive teams implement the policy. In this process, the national and regional councillors need to be able to say to their constituent assemblies: “Look, but this won’t work because…” or “There are several ways to read this: what do you mean by…?”. In a similar vein, the executives need to be able to say to the council: “In practice, this will cause problems …” or “This policy suggestion will tie the hospitals in too much red tape …” And so forth.

The COO needs to be actively present at national council meetings. Often, but not always, the heads of the relevant departments will also need to be present. None of these executive roles are responsible for policy-making, but their inputs to policy-making are necessary. We would suggest that the department heads be

appointed jointly by the council and the COO since they need to be responsive to both; the heads of departments are coordinated by the COO and are responsive to the COO, but this is on behalf of the council. The heads of department must not feel that they are responsible to the COO at the expense of the council, for that would condense too much power in the COO. Neither should the heads of department feel that they are responsible to the council at the expense of the COO for that would effectively make the COO's role ineffective where, for instance, at critical junctures, the heads could ignore the coordinating efforts of the COO. Therefore, the suggestion is practical without concentrating power.

Conclusions

In this section, we have outlined how a national assembly might work with its council and executive teams and deal with the so-called 'business of government', without this constituting the creation of a government as a ruling body. Typically, participatory assemblies as currently operating in some countries in the world, such as national assemblies and citizens assemblies, are conceived as serving only an external consultative role to government. We suggest that this doesn't go far enough. Indeed, according to Ackerman, most experiences of participatory governance have not allowed "the direct involvement of citizens and societal groups in the core functions of government" (Ackerman, 2004, 448, quoted Chhotray and Stoker, 2009, 173). Instead, "the trend … has been to "send sections of the state to society" rather than inviting "society into the inner chambers of the state" (ibid.). In short, Ackerman advocates that participatory assemblies serve as part of the government's decision-making body.

However, in contrast, we argue that this position doesn't go far enough because, as the quote suggests, it still separates society and government. We have illustrated how the 'business of government' doesn't require a ruling government separate from the people. Government can and should be an instrument of the people. From this point of view, the whole idea that society should be invited into the inner chambers of the state is like a leg inviting a person for a walk! If power belongs to the people, then the idea of the government inviting the people to join in the decision-making is like the tail wagging the dog.

Given that this is wrong way around, the question becomes how the consensus of many local assemblies can be best coalesced into and organised as a national consensus which will serve as practical guidance for a civil service. This is what we have outlined so far. These organisational arrangements are supposed to be designed as instruments of the people and, if successful, they can amplify the power

of the people in a Spinozian sense, as we have argued, rather than diminishing it by passing it on to a set of rulers and leaders.

If these arrangements are well designed, and if the various groups trust each other to work well together, then it should be possible for each group (i. e. the assembly, the council and the executive officials) to respect the function of the other, and thereby not be swamped with work. To recap: the assemblies need to have a strong sense of direction and priorities for the relevant communities in the formulation of these goals and values, or meta-policy. They don't usually need to work on the details. The work of councils is often to transform these meta-policy statements into policies and or plans of action, with budgets attached. The job of the executive teams is to put these policies into practice and to apply the allocated budget to various policy actions. This triangle of movement will function practically so long as there are ongoing conversations between each node, and one group doesn't take over the work of the other (becoming overwhelmed by details, for instance). All these are supported by continued dialogues for maintaining and developing trust. When there is trust, there can be a fluid delegation of function.

Budgeting and Taxation

The decisions of the people will include how the budget is allocated, public resources recognised, funds raised and spent according to the community's priorities and policies. This suggests that people's participation in budgeting and their attitude towards taxation will not be one of suspicion and resistance, but of active engagement and contribution. Budgeting and taxation meta-policies will be part of the participatory consensus rather than a matter of compliance. When budget meta-policies decisions are made by consensus, and directed towards well-being of all, communities will see more readily how public services and taxes contribute to well-being.

Globally, there are many attempts at taking a participatory approach to budgeting, decentralising resources and taxation (Dias and Júlio, 2018). Practices, such as local-level policy councils and participatory budgeting, seem to make a significant difference in enhancing people's and businesses' willingness to pay taxes and in the increasing the collecting of local taxes (Alston, et al., 2016; Touchton, et al., 2021). However, these approaches are feasible at a local level, e.g. in a small community or a municipality, and for the majority of participatory budgeting. We need to know how this might function at regional and national levels. So, we shall now explore the following questions: In a decentalised participatory national system, how might budgets be allocated to implement collective policy decisions? What processes might be involved and who might facilitate these processes?

Budgeting

Participatory Budgeting (PB) is a key aspect of decentralised national governance. Some regard PB as prefigurative of the kind of governance processes that we propose (Baiocchi and Ganuza, 2014). In our proposal, budgeting is directly connected to meta-policy consensus. Any collective decision made on a particular policy should include a budgeting consensus. This means that the assemblies at different levels would have a better understanding how public finances can enable well-being. Existing research has observed that participatory budgeting meetings tend to be very well attended events. This is because budgeting makes the participants feel that their engagement in policies or projects is real, and thus it matters to the assembly significantly that more people take part (ibid.).

In practice, in a decentralised system, the assembly may ask the council to set up a sub-group dedicated to discussions around the relevant budget lines attached to specific policy decisions. The finance committee will work alongside the COO and other officials to ensure that appropriate technical and financial information is gathered in order to propose a budget to the assembly. To enable the people to truly exercise power, in the context of participatory budgeting consensus, neutral technical support will be crucial. This means that those who provide the relevant budgetary information cannot have any self-interest and ideologically-based concerns at heart. That is to say, the technical details offered must be unbiased. The council might also appoint experts to help evaluate the quotes for budget. Furthermore, assemblies will need to decide whether to reach consensus about the specific meta-policies prior to discussing the budget, or making a collective decision on a particular meta-policies alongside the relevant budget.

It is necessary for the facilitators to bear in mind of the risk of tensions, at local, regional and national budget discussions. Budgeting can introduce more opportunities for contestation and confrontation within the assemblies, which may reflect ideological assumptions and diverse understandings of public interest. Discussing budget allocations can open up new questioning concerning the advantages and disadvantages of various groups. Whilst participatory budgeting is a testimony of the assembly's integrity and solidarity, it does place a huge demand on the facilitators to maintain and deepen the community's relational bonds.

Taxation

When a community assembly makes budgetary decisions, it must also decide on how to raise the revenues to meet these budgetary demands. These revenues are mostly collected through taxation. Typically, most government revenue

comes from income tax and national insurance contributions (Keep 2023). However, there is also revenue from corporation tax, sales tax, import duties and various fees, as well as various land taxes and inheritance tax.

Currently, most governments struggle to collect tax revenues. Individuals and corporations try to avoid paying taxes and, in response, governments develop mechanisms to deter such evasion. Because taxation is centralised, so are budgets; this is reflects the power of the centralised state. In this manner, the paying of taxes becomes an externally-imposed obligation for ordinary persons and businesses. It is felt as such. Most people and businesses decide to pay taxes by weighing the benefits of tax evasion against the risk of being caught and fined as a purely egoistic cost-benefit analysis decision (Alm, 2012). In this regard, current taxation practices reflect the political-economic system in which people work. Within an individualistic and competitively divisive system, people's willingness to pay taxes is conditioned by their perceptions of the meaning of their work. When the economic system as a whole instrumentalises work, taxation will perceived as doing the same. Taxation will be an imposition and it will be felt as such.

In contrast, in a decentralised participatory system, tax revenues allocated for community services will be part of the community's own decisions, which will be felt by them as such. In a participatory democracy, the community itself decides how tax revenues should be raised. Of course, the details of the relevant meta-policies will need management by officials. For example, the finance committee can propose to the council appropriate tax rates based on the assembly's meta-policies and, based on this, the council can also stipulate how percentages of revenue should contribute to various public services. The assembly might also appoint an audit committee to review how taxes have been spent in the past year. Together, the finance and the audit committees can propose spending adjustments.

National Communities

At the beginning of the book, we started with the axiological principle that all people are equally non-instrumentally valuable. We explained that this means that no one should be instrumentalised more or less than any other, all other things being equal. Without further premises, this principle of equality of value doesn't translate into conclusions about justice as fairness or what people deserve or have a right to. As we explained, it is more basic than claims about rights, deserts and fairness.

Self-Identifications

In conjunction with the notion of peacefulness, the axiological principle of equal value, it has implications about self-identification. It implies that our basic self-identifications shouldn't entail any antagonistic 'us vs them'. Our basic self-identifications are those that don't derive from other self-identifications and, in this way, they capture what or who we take ourselves to be most fundamentally. There is a world of psychological difference between 'I am primarily British, and I am human secondarily' and 'I am primarily human, and British secondarily'. The first takes nationality to be a more basic self-identification than species. The second takes species to be more basic than nationality. There are good reasons to think that the second is a constitutive element of well-being (Thomson, Gill and Goodson, 2020). One will be more at peace when one's self-identification is more aligned with what one more fundamentally is, with for example, being a human, a person, an 'I', or a conscious being (Gill and Thomson 2019).

We need the concept of more and less basic self-identifying to make sense of how we should understand ourselves as members of a local community in relation to ourselves as members of humanity. We need such a concept to reconcile localism, nationalism and cosmopolitanism. On the one hand, we all need to feel that we are members of a local community or a social group, which we identify with. This sense of belonging is a part of well-being. On the other hand, we also need to feel that we are all part of humanity and each one of us is equal in value with any other. This sense of the impartial reality of other people is also part of our well-being (Thomson, Gill and Goodson, 2020 p. 134–137). We can have both, but only so long as the second is more basic than the first (rather than the other way around). This is why we need the concept of more and less basic self-identifying.

These points are important to explain why participatory democracy needs to be locally rooted, but without being parochial. The members of the local community can meet face to face to discuss their local affairs. This must be the starting place, where people gather to define where their community is going. But this *their* quickly expands. We are first and foremost persons, under the axiological principle that all persons are equally real and equally non-instrumentally valuable. In this sense, we are ineluctably members of wider communities. Our well-being requires that our self-identifications reflect this: we are primarily persons and only derivatively members of this or that community. This means that there is reason to care for the well-being of other local communities. But this way of putting the point subtly misstates it because it places the emphasis on *other.* It implies that they are not us. So, rather, we should say that we are already members of

wider communities by virtue of our being equally valuable as persons. Communitarianism is already cosmopolitan.

What matters primordially is the well-being of people. The hugely complex political and economic organisations we inhabit are in part simply ways to ensure that we can help each other to live better. We exchange goods, collaborate on projects etc. for this utilitarian reason. But there is another aspect. Being and doing with others, belonging to a community and being part of humanity are constitutive of our well-being. These aren't just external causal aids to feeling better or desire satisfaction; they are ineluctable aspects of our lives. And in these personal and community relations, we are equally valuable. Therefore, goal-driven instrumental rationality is insufficient as a principle of institutional design. The utilitarian approach isn't enough. The institutions we live in need to embody the non-instrumentally valuable relational components of well-being, which both communitarian and cosmopolitan philosophies articulate.

Regional and National Communities

This means that regional and national assemblies and the communication with the locals need to be constructed and run in ways that allow people in their local communities to feel and be part of the regional and national. The local assembly is a site for people to be part of a community, to enjoy being together, to deliberate and decide together, to be part of each other's lives.[55] This spirit can be extended to the region and beyond.

However, this idea isn't the same as the notions of antagonistic solidarity and nationalism. The first arises when the solidarity of a group depends on an antagonistic 'us versus them'. For example, this occurs when one community feels they are better than another, and also when communities feel that they are victims. Their solidarity depends on an opposition to another group. As we argued when discussing agonism, it is one thing to think that antagonistic solidarity is a necessary means towards greater justice in times of oppression and inequality. It is another to claim that it would be part of the landscape of a participatory society that is free of such dehumanisation. The first is plausible; the second isn't. Indeed, the feelings and realities of antagonistic solidarity are antithetical to the three preconditions (respect, goodwill and trust) that enable participatory democracy. When

55 We used the word 'enjoyable' with a big proviso. We appreciate being married or having children and having parents but this doesn't mean that these people we love are never annoying, that we don't quarrel etc. But these difficulties are part of the relationships and are growing pains.

these preconditions are absent or threatened, remedial dialogues and collective healing processes would be established. Participatory democracy requires that everyone is treated as equally non-instrumentally valuable, and that past wounds are addressed and trauma healed. Insofar as this is not the case, the society needs to provide the conditions of justice that such equality requires.[56] It also needs to provide the relevant spaces for people to deepen their experience and understanding of others. This is primarily the responsibility of the communities themselves, as manifest through the role of the facilitators. These human requirements have significant implications for the economy because they are near impossible in an economy that is unjust and which systematically instrumentalises people. Inter-community relations between different demographic groups will be less difficult insofar as there is more diversity within communities, and insofar as the experiences of deep dialogue and collective healing have been genuinely transformative, which allow a person to experience a shift in their basic self-identification.

Of course, people will typically care more about the well-being of their local community than they do for other local communities and for the region and nation as a whole. This makes sense. However, this cannot detract from the fact all persons are equally non-instrumentally valuable and that there is good reason to care for anyone irrespective of where they live. In this way, a local community cannot separate itself from wider communities and pretend that it shouldn't care about and participate in the development of the region or nation and beyond. We all participate in the definition of the direction of and the policy of the nation. This means that participatory democracy shouldn't be only a local affair; it should extend to the whole territory, and transnationally.

The State

For many people, it is hard to imagine a well-governed society that isn't dominated by the state. Although the state is historically a recent invention, it is an extraordinarily successful one. Contemporary societies that have weak states are usually in poverty and conflict, and are in danger of violent implosion, with a breakdown of essential public services. Nevertheless, in a discussion of how power should belong to the people and what kinds of institutions might allow this power to be well organised without instrumentalisation, it is necessary to outline a critical evaluation and reimagining of the state as an institution. After all, as we have seen, the

56 We have deliberately avoided the thorny and complex issues about how the equality of the value of person might translate into claims about justice.

aim of political parties and various economic interests is to capture the state. Popular understanding is apt to identify the state with the government, and the government with the ruling political party, and the party with a small set of politicians, who can be purchased. Nevertheless, the ‘state’ is an elusive notion.

Clearly, in one sense of the term, the state isn’t a single monolithic organisation (Hay, C. 2001). It consists of a set of institutions that may be loosely related. For example, there is the Parliament or Congress and Senate, the judicial system, the government consisting of various departments and the civil servants who work in those departments. There is also the central bank, the military, the police, and a host of other public and semi-public institutions.[57] Furthermore, we should include all the local institutions mentioned earlier, which are often referred to as ‘administrative divisions’. Because this constitutes a large and loose set of institutions, states are not univocal conglomerates that are defined by clear and consistent aims and policies. Indeed, an insightful critique of the efficacy of the state often includes the extent to which it is fragmented (Thimont, et al., 2022).

‘Four Machines’

The state as a set of institutions consists fundamentally of four machines. The point of characterising them as machines is that this Deleuze metaphor captures the concept of structure dynamically (Deleuze, 1987). If the reader thinks that the term ‘machine’ is inappropriate in this context, please substitute it with ‘function’, for the moment. Let’s take a closer look at the four machines.

The first intends to make everyone who lives within a territory an obedient tax-paying and law-abiding person. It does so by two means: the force of law or through manufactured consent or propaganda. Anyone who isn’t law-abiding as a resident is a criminal.[58] This demand for obedience in deeds, beliefs and feelings is an inheritance of the medieval system of fealty. In the final analysis, the force of law is the threat of violence: to be beaten and/or locked up. In sum, the aim of the first machine is to make us obedient.

The second machine makes a foreigner of everyone else, that is people who would need special permission to live in the territory legally. We can define this idea later. At core, the main positive purpose of this is to create a clear administrative unit: a boundary for the other machines. In so doing, it creates an antagonistic us-vs-them, the ‘them’ being foreigners and the ‘us’, non-foreigners, who are

57 https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations

58 Of course, law-abiding persons include temporary guests or visitors.

somehow more normal and important. This antagonistic divide supports the first machine because patriotism provides psychological backing for the idea that we should all be law-abiding and obedient. At a higher level, this second machine also applies to other states: it *ipso facto* creates foreign states. Each state foreignises the others. When each of several states does this to each other, we have an antagonistic international arena of competing national states (Gill and Thomson, 2019, Chapter 9).

It is important to note that, although they work together, the first two machines don't quite overlap, and the difference between their respective products is the category of resident aliens, which quickly becomes equivalent to 'foreigners who live in our country'. Residents are inputs into the first machine, but the second machine allows for the idea of residents who are foreigners. This legal category helps generate a host of prejudices when it is mingled with the belief that nations and states should overlap. In this discussion, we have so far deliberately avoided the term 'citizen' for reasons that will soon become clear.

The third machine provides various benefits and services for those who reside within the territory. These benefits include the protection by the law, institutional and economic infrastructure and various public services. These benefits do not accrue to foreigners who are not residents (except incidentally and in special circumstances) and, at a higher level, these benefits include protection from the aggression of foreign states. In this respect, the third machine presupposes the second.

This third machine can be a tremendous force for helping the poor, but equally it can be a monstrous energy for supporting the wealthy. Political parties vie for control of this machine. And these political parties are instrumentalised by powerful economic interests. After all, it makes economic sense to spend (let us say) $500 million on political campaigns when the projected reward might be 10 or more times greater.

There is, however, also a distinct and deeper point. The economic institutional infrastructure is a very important benefit of the state; the state enables and supports this infrastructure. In our current economic system, the use of this infrastructure tends to instrumentalise people and land, and so the state is party to the attending forms of dehumanisation.

The fourth machine controls the other three machines largely through the creation of legislation and other governing rules. The primary purpose of the fourth is to allow the other three sets of machines to work, or to adjust and direct the way they function. This means that the fourth is a meta-machine. That is to say, to capture the third, one needs the fourth.

Our primary thesis is that the state should be defined in the first instance as the set of institutions that embody these four machines. These quasi-mechanical processes define the state as an assemblage of institutions that constitute these

four machines. This doesn't mean that there is a one-to-one correspondence. For instance, the police force is an institution that performs both functions 1 and 3. The argument in defence of the primary thesis would be a long one, as would be any attempt to amplify the above into a proper theory of the state, but these would constitute diversions for our project.

However, we do need some clarifications. The notion of a citizen should be defined in terms of the relations between persons and these four machines. We have carefully avoided using this term up to now because definitions of the state that involve the notion of citizen are circular. For instance, we cannot define without circularity a state as a set of institutions that enforces laws over its citizens. Additionally, the relation of the state to citizens is very different in the case of each of the four machines. Roughly, the first makes us obedient law-abiding tax-payers; the second makes us non-foreigners; third, beneficiaries; and the fourth, voters.

As explained, we employed the term 'machine' to articulate the idea of an impersonal social structure in process. A structure consists in the relations between institutions as characterised by certain principles. For instance, insofar as a society is capitalist, it is defined by the principle of the maximal accumulation of capital for its own sake. Such structural characterisations of a society are impersonal; they don't depend directly on people's intentions. However, this doesn't deny that people are required to fill the roles that define the institutions. And, additionally, structural descriptions of a society don't rule out the agency of persons. Rather, such descriptions characterise the aspects of the social framework within which human agents typically act. Insofar as these points apply to the state, it is aptly described with the analogy of a machine because it is a framework within which we act. Moreover, the state isn't a single institution. It is an assemblage of institutions which are best defined in terms of the four machines, which have certain inherent tendencies that would be realised quite differently in diverging historical and social contexts.

As the nature of the second machine indicates, a fuller examination of the state requires an analysis of its roles in international law and transnational political institutions. For instance, a state is partly defined by its relations to other states, and therefore by its position as a player in international relations. So defined, it is an entity with legal rights and duties, subject to international law. Unfortunately, these aspects are beyond the scope of this book (see Chapter 9, Gill and Thomson, 2019). However, it is important to note that, in international law, the state is treated as a single entity, indeed as a legal person, which can perform actions, such as invading, signing treaties and setting up embassies. This tends to hide the fact that the state is an assemblage that is often loose, and it encourages us to erroneously reify the state as if it were a super-person that has non-derivative interests of its own (Cf. Chapter 1 and 2).

Much political theory concerning the state can be recast in terms of the relations between these four machines and their aims. For instance, traditional theories weave a narrative in which the state is the result of a social contract in which people as defined by the second machine agree to the rigors of the first for the rewards of the third. Such apologists will tend to place the third machine as primordial: after all, what is the point of the first and second without the third? Thus, we have an implicit social contract, and it is this contract that permits or legitimises the fourth kind of machine. This is the kind of view we find in Hobbes and Locke. However, this is a specific narrative about how the state functions, and how it is made legitimate. As such, this specific narrative shouldn't be identified with the definition of the state. Indeed, we have already criticised this traditional theory, as have many other authors.

Another narrative concerns the attempt of corporations and the wealthy to seize the third machine by capturing the fourth, and by relying on the mechanisms of the first and the second to maintain and deepen that capture. Fears of immigration and of foreign invasion (the second machine) and the reinforcing of the need for obedience to authority (the first machine) help fortify voting patterns that benefit the wealthy. According to this narrative, the role of political parties is to try to gain control of the state by constituting an elected government and a majority in the parliament, but it is in the interest of corporations and vested economic interests to control the political parties. More on this later.

How the Machines Instrumentalise

Having completed some clarifications, we can return to the main point: how do the roles of the state in an instrumentalising political system compare to those in a system that doesn't systematically instrumentalise? What is the contrast? With these differences identified, we can answer to what extent the proposed political system avoids the major current instrumentalising of the state.

Let us briefly describe how each of four machines tends to instrumentalise. The purpose here isn't to suggest that we should dispense with the state or its main institutions. The four machines often function seamlessly, and to the great benefit of many. People usually take them for granted. However, for this reason, we are prone to blame their deficiencies on specific parties or particular politicians, even when the problem is more structural. Our aim isn't to enter the debate about the desirability of the state, but rather to highlight how the state, through the four defining machines, instrumentalises people, and to show how the political system proposed in this book obviates some of these tendencies.

The first machine clearly tends to instrumentalise people's agency: it turns us into obedient tax payers and law-abiders. This doesn't imply that being a law-abiding person automatically requires a negation of one's agency. Indeed, only agents can follow the law! Nevertheless, in the final analysis, one is either manipulated or forced to obey. We are manipulated insofar as our opinions and attitudes are shaped so that we are more readily governable, as Hume observed. So, we acquire the opinion that those in authority should be obeyed, and that people of power and wealth are more important. Disobedience and rebellion are the opposite side of the same phenomenon, weaved from the same cloth. The relevant relations are often more like adult to child than adult to adult, in which there is a shared sense of equality. Obedience is a state of being or a psychology that is a manifestation of these social relations.

The second machine has inherent antagonistic tendencies; it tends to generates racial, ethnic and nationalistic divisions. It enhances the tendency to create an 'us and them' in which the them are portrayed and treated as less than fully human. The idea that the state should track or coincide with nations greatly exacerbates these tendencies. This idea creates the expectation that the residents of a territory should ideally be members of a single national group, and that each national group should have their own state. At the higher level, the second is a machine that creates divisions between states. Because states are defined in terms of their national self-interest, at this higher level, it has an inherent tendency to cause wars between nations and states, which is enshrined in the international order, such as the charter of the UN.

Among other things, the third machine maintains and oversees the legal, institutional and financial infrastructure that allows for the manufacturing, commerce and innovations that produce wealth. This is a double-edged sword. On the one side, the manufacturing, commercial and financial institutions that it actively supports are typically instrumentalising insofar as they treat labour, consumption and land as mere resources to be harvested for the sake of profit. Such institutions help create deep economic inequality, which perpetuate and deepen the social inequalities typically created by the first machine. Such institutions actively seek the support of the state to protect and enhance their interests. Hence, they lobby, and try to capture machine 4 (Provost and Kennard 2023). The third machine is readily captured and employed for the greater benefit of those who need it least through more tax concessions, subsidies, grants and bailouts. However, on the other hand, machine 3 brings great benefits for many people. In many places, the state provides social benefits and public services, many of which help mitigate some of the most damaging effects of these economic processes. Therefore, with regard to machine 3, the state is a battleground between competing interests. It is also important to point out that the third machine can also take over the second,

and thereby, the state endorses and promotes commercial and financial practices that exploit people in other countries and their land, as well as foreign states for the benefit of its own people and domestic corporations.

We have already described the main ways in which the fourth machine instrumentalises people. It does so by turning them into voters who are ruled, and it does this through the institutions that allow people to be coerced or ignored. These institutions include the voting system, political parties and government. We needn't repeat the argumentation of the earlier chapters. However, it is worth noting as an aside something important: the complexity of the legal system, which renders it inaccessible to almost everyone except experts. This helps to create the conditions under which most people feel that they need rulers, and in which participatory democracy looks impossible. This needs to be reconceived. Since the essence of all laws is relatively simple, and given the technology of interactive websites, the heart of the legal system of any country can and should be accessible to all.[59]

Beyond Instrumentalised Politics

We have quickly rehearsed the ways in which the state has inherent tendencies to instrumentalise or dehumanise people through each of the four machines and because of the interactions between them. These tendencies will be realised very differently in distinct historical and social contexts. We have not provided this list as an argument against the state. As said before, the current liberal democratic system is clearly better than feudalism, totalitarianism and dictatorships, and in many ways, the modern state is an incredibly successful creation. Nevertheless, since we want to conceive a non-instrumentalising political system, we need to reimagine the state by showing how its institutions would be less instrumentalising within a participatory system. Finally, we will also consider whether the amalgam of institutions in the proposed system merits the reifying title 'the state'.

In this book, we have investigated in depth the fourth of the machines. We have only done so with respect to the main political institutions, and we haven't examined the role of social media, the press, religious organisations. We have not considered the instrumentalizing role of corporations through lobbying and pressure groups. We mentioned only in passing the complexity and inaccessibility of our system of laws. We have concentrated on how the voice of the people can and should be organised to create policy and legislation; how the relations and communities created or strengthened through such a process are part of our

59 Laws stated as conclusive reason statements require that all exceptions are enumerated.

well-being, experienced as the joy and delight of being together; and how the required processes of dialogue and understanding would constitute a holistic education or community learning process. Hopefully, this suffices to show that the proposed system would comprise a version of machine 4 that doesn't inherently instrumentalise. Because it is the meta-machine that directs the other 3, the fourth is the one that we needed to concentrate on.

The arguments of this book also indicate how some of the inherent instrumentalisation of machine 1 would be transformed in a participatory system. To recap, the first machine renders people obedient and hence law-abiding either by controlling their beliefs and attitudes, or else through the threat of violence, such as prison. This machine is important for the state because it maintains the tax income that funds the whole four-machine system. It also eliminates the threat of mass revolt. Finally, it supports the third machine by maintaining public order and by discouraging people from harming others by following the law.

The proposed system alleviates at least one aspect of the instrumentalising of machine 1. It corresponds to a shift in social relations such that there is no-one to obey. Under the proposal, there are no rulers. There is no-one who needs that the consent of people be manufactured in order to stay in power. There is only the people. Like Hume after him, Hobbes observed: "the power of the mighty hath no foundation but in the opinion and belief of the people" (Hobbes, the English Works, VI, 184, 237). Under the proposed system, the mighty is simply the people themselves. Therefore, there is no requirement that people's beliefs and attitudes should be formed in a certain way in order to support obedience to rulers or to a state that is separate from the people. The underlying social relations of equality dissolve the imperative that people need to be obedient to serve the needs of the state. This means that, insofar as a system is participatory, it will not need propaganda and other forms of manipulation and discipline to try to make people more obedient.

The proposed system shifts the instrumentalisation of machine 1 in another regard, namely the penal. In a system based on consensus, when state institutions inflict punishment on persons, this would be based on their general consent to the relevant policies. This implies that I have consented to any meta-policies that lead to the legislation that polices and punishes people, for example, for tax infractions and violence. However, this doesn't mean that the police and penal institutions would stop instrumentalising persons! The proposal for a participatory system doesn't automatically mean that these institutions would be transformed such that they no longer instrumentalise, or even reformed so that they instrumentalise less and are more humane. It depends on the will of the people, and on the viable alternatives. However, the proposal does mitigate such instrumentalisation in the sense that the people would have consented to the relevant meta-policies, and of

course, they have the opportunity to introduce reforms. Under a participatory system, such decisions will be based on consensus arising from extensive dialogue and deliberation, and not on voting based on superficial political party campaigns.

Someone perceptive might complain that we have contradicted ourselves. The above seems to condone some of the punitive instrumentalisation inherent in machine 1, given that the people consent to it. But isn't the instrumentalisation of persons always inherently bad? If it is then the two claims seem contradictory. In reply, the objection misses a major point from Chapter 1. We never claimed that instrumentalising people is always conclusively morally wrong. We were careful to distant our position from this Kantian one. The reason against instrumentalising people is inherent; it isn't derivative on other results such as damage caused. Yes! But it isn't always conclusive; it can be overridden. Additionally, our claims are about human well-being and not morality. Furthermore, we have not discussed retributive conceptions of justice and the relevant institutions that embody state violence. Believers in retributive justice will claim that sometimes people *deserve* to be instrumentalised. Their opponents might argue that the well-being of people should generally come first, over and above considerations of what people deserve, which are always derivative. We haven't engaged with this kind of debate in this book.

In conclusion, the arguments of this work both alleviate and mitigate the inherent instrumentalisation of machine 1. The alleviation is fundamental because the social relations in a participatory system are very different than those in political systems that require the functioning of machine 1. In a participatory system, we don't need to obey and follow leaders in order to be organised. This separates the apparent need for child-like obedience from adult-like law-abidingness. Additionally, participation mitigates the punitive instrumentalisation of machine 1 insofar as the people would have consented to it. But, on its own, it doesn't transform, remove or reform it.

Machine 2 instrumentalises other people by treating them as foreigners in an antagonistic sense of the term: 'they don't belong to us' with the added implication that *they* matter less. *Ipso facto*, it creates the idea that we are *not* foreigners, with the tendency towards the feeling that we matter more. These instrumentalisations contravene the idea of equality of the non-derivative value of all persons. When each state is comprised of a machine of this kind, then this creates an international arena in which sovereign states pursue their self-interest antagonistically. These instrumentalising tendencies could be dramatically reduced by a transnational participatory democratic system, based on the principles outlined early in this book. Unfortunately, the project of showing how such a system might be possible and might function is an undertaking beyond the scope of this book. It requires, among many other things, reconceiving the political architecture of global gover-

nance systems so that they may be genuinely peaceful and synergetic. We began to lay some of the conceptual foundations for such an architecture in an earlier work (see Chapter 10, Gill and Thomson, 2019). In other words, we don't yet have a definitive argument to show how this aspect of the state can be de-instrumentalised. We only have seedling suggestions.

Machine 3 functions by providing an array of benefits to people, groups, businesses and society generally. As we saw, it instrumentalises in three ways. It maintains an economic infrastructure that instrumentalises people and the land. Additionally, it adds to the resulting inequality by distributing benefits unequally. It distributes benefits that favour the state and the *status quo*, and it also distributes in ways that favour the political parties that govern, and the financial and corporate interests that have captured it. They steer machine 3 towards benefiting the alliances parties form to gain or stay in power. Finally, the third joins with the second machine to exploit other countries and their people economically, through investment, trade agreements, financial markets, foreign aid and political manipulation.

Of the three ways in which the third machine functions, we have only discussed the second and partially. We have indicated that a participatory system would not require parties that systematically render the political domain antagonistic. This removes one kind of institutional instrumentalisation, but it clearly doesn't eliminate the huge political pressures that arise from the interests of the varying sectors of the economy. For example, extraction companies want concessions on public lands; financial companies want unregulated investment opportunities. This first kind of instrumentalisation needs to be examined separately. To assess the possibility of removing or reducing it, we would need to envisage a non-instrumentalising economic infrastructure, as it were, alternatives to capitalism. This is the main content of a future volume in this DeGruyter series on governance. In any case, we would need legislation to prevent business and other private interests from buying the lobbying services of people within the various participatory assemblies. To assess the possibility of removing the third form of instrumentalisation of machine 3 would require a discussion of international relations and transnational global political and economic institutions in relation to a global democracy. This too is beyond the scope of this book.

As a general conclusion, the above analysis suggests the following. The four machines that comprise the assemblage of the state instrumentalise, each in various ways. But within the framework of a participatory democracy, we can begin to glimpse the possibility of a similar set of functions that don't systematically instrumentalise because they are organs of the people. They are institutions that arise from the people organising themselves. From this perspective, the vista looks different. We need each other to be law-abiding; we need administrative territorial

units but we need to live peacefully, and as equals, with people from distant lands as a global humanity; we need to benefit ourselves and each other through our work: and together, we need to decide our future and relevant policies. In short, there is the possibility of having the benefits of the four machines without the current instrumentalisations. As authors, we are not pretending that this book shows how this possible, but we do think that this book shows how some of the machines that currently constitute the state can be de-instrumentalised. In other words, this work points towards a human-centred political system in which the functioning of central political institutions is less machine-like.

The term 'the state' suggests a monolithic centralised and dominant organisation that has monopoly powers over a territory and the people who live in it. The system that we have proposed disperses these concentrations. It allows for local assemblies to form organisations that perform important functions but which aren't classifiable as either part of the state or profit-seeking enterprises, such as independent trusts and partnerships. Arguably, the proposed recommendations amount to a part of a transformation in the nature of the state, and such the term 'the state' itself is inappropriate. This is mainly because, under the proposed system, the currently conceived duality between state and civil society dissolves. In our proposal, the state becomes civil society and its institutional organs. Indeed, in this regard, the term 'citizen' is also misleading if it suggests that a citizen is someone who belongs to a state, because this suggestion throws back to the idea of the state as something above us. It is even worse if the term implies that a citizen is a part of state if this suggests that the state is a super-entity with its own non-derivative interests.

Nevertheless, a more complete transformation of the state would also require a non-instrumentalising economic system and a peaceful transnational world order, and therefore what we have offered in this book is incomplete.

Evaluation of Governance System

Accountability is a central concern of representative democracy. It generates practices that are necessary in a system in which there are ruling institutions that systematically instrumentalise. Such measures imply distrust. They assume the need to ensure that those with political authority are held accountable for the power they have won. They also suggest a measurement-based approach, rooted in a model of cost-effect analysis. To this end, there are a myriad of indices and measurements to appraise the performance of governments, which also allow for comparisons between the world's countries. These include: the Quality of Governance Index, Good Governance Index, Worldwide Governance Indicators, Global Gover-

nance Index, Economist Democracy Index, Rule of Law Index and the Global Peace Index.

These indices are limited to evaluating how well governance institutions work within the existing structure. They usually don't tell us how well the institutions and the structure itself serve the well-being of people. Instead, they tend to focus on an input-output analysis which assumes that governance institutions are only instrumentally valuable and then mainly for economic growth. Even the OECD framework for deliberative democracy mainly emphasises how the decision-makers can integrate the public's opinions in policy consultations (Nabatachi, et al., 2012; Chwalisz, 2017; OECD, 2020). This indicates that the framework reflects a largely instrumental conception of people's participation and deliberation.[60] In other words, the overriding concern is whether it is a good method for making policy-decisions.

Another purpose of governance assessment and accountability is to help improve governance practices within existing institutions. An accountability model does not necessarily provide a clear picture of what the specific improvements are, and how they might have impact on the well-being of communities. This is often because governments themselves usually focus on short to medium-term interventions which might not be extended beyond their terms in office. New policies tend to be introduced during political campaigns in order to win the next election. The new policies will often require different criteria for assessment, and different measurements to discern their effectiveness. Therefore, in this context, it is difficult to identify improvements to governance.

For the participatory governance system proposed in this book, we have indicated that the set of principles to underpin the system might also serve as part of a framework to gauge how well the governance system has been working. Together, these principles can provide the evaluative basis for the assessment of assemblies, councils and those in different roles, (e.g. the facilitators, the delegates, and the executives) and for evaluative self- reflection.

In contrast to the assessment of existing governance system in which accountability is directed at the ruling party and how far it has been effective in implementing the policy pledges made during the election campaign, the participatory system will seek to reflect on how well we, the people, have been making decisions together. The four principles outlined in Chapter 1 and the general features of consensus-building processes can serve as some of evaluative criteria for appreciatively and critically reviewing the practices of the governance system. These self-reviews would be conducted at local, regional and national levels. They would be

60 For more on this, see the Appendix of Chapter 5.

directed to the process in itself, as well as to the results. Such evaluations might employ metrics, but they would be based on mainly discussion and dialogue.

Conclusions

The central task of this book has been to characterise a system of governance that doesn't instrumentalise people and that respects all persons as non-instrumentally valuable, equally. We have argued that such a system would be directed towards the well-being of all, through a participatory democracy in which there is peaceful processes of consensus-building.

In such a system, there would be no rulers, nor the ruled, no political parties, and no government. There would be no patronage of parties by the wealthy and no need for political campaigns for power. Under these conditions, there would be no career politicians. The press would be free but would not be affiliated to any political alliances, and would not consist of for-profit institutions.

We have outlined the governance processes as follows: People will come together in inclusive public spaces, as local assemblies, to make collective decisions based on consensus. The same processes will repeat at regional and national levels for consensus-based policymaking. Decisions will be implemented by non-politically affiliated officials and institutions appointed by the assemblies. Hence, their roles are to serve the assemblies or the people. In this way, power is lodged with the people.

Within such a system, there would be a greatly reduced tendency towards ideological stances. There would be less antagonism and the system would not require winners and losers, as in current political battles. Thus, there would be more of a culture of political peace, which would include the practices of a peaceful epistemology. Such a system of governance could not exist in isolation. It is only imaginable in conjunction with a non-instrumentalised economy and a human-centred educational system both of which we have described elsewhere (Gill and Thomson, 2012 and 2017).

We have argued for this ideal governance system knowing that it is idealistic, in the sense that it could not yet be implemented in most societies as they are now today. People are too polarised, too antagonistic, too mistrustful and too willing to instrumentalise each other. The current system is too deeply unjust. The prerequisites for a participatory democracy are not yet in place. Nevertheless, as societies, we need to have an idea of what non-instrumentalised political, economic and educational systems would look like, and how they might work. We need a better understanding of what is possible that goes beyond critiques of and reforms to the existing instrumentalising systems. Only in this way, we can change the conditions so that non-instrumentalising structures can be developed. Some political theories, such as Rawls' theory of justice, are criticised for being too idealistic, and for not showing us the way forward towards achieving a just society. However, such cri-

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tiques presuppose that proposing reforms should be the main job of normative political theory. In contrast, we would argue that there is a need for many kinds of liberating theories, not just those that advocate reforms to and critique the concepts of the existing system. Specifically, this book has provided an outline sketch of a better political structure rather than suggesting reforms to the existing structure. This is one way to conceive the many tasks of political philosophy. Note that this view of governance applies to the political domain; we are not arguing that all institutions should be crafted under these ideas.

Review of the Ideas Put Forward in the Book

In the context of academic discussions of participatory democracy, what are the significant contributions of this book as we see it? In other words, what does this book add to the ongoing debates?

First, this work advocates a conceptual and normative framework for good governance. This framework is based on an axiology, a view of what is valuable and why. This axiology affirms that the life of persons is non-derivatively valuable and that, because of this, it is an evaluative error, a normative category mistake, to instrumentalise persons. Instrumentalisation consists in treating a person as an object, or as less than fully human, which means denying their subjectivity and agency. Dehumanisation, commodification, oppression, marginalisation, alienation, objectification and demonisation are different forms of instrumentalisation.

This view transcends the typical dichotomy between Kantian and consequentialist axiologies. On the one hand, according to the Kantian view, the moral worth of an action depends solely on whether the content of the act of willing inherent in the action contradicts the value of persons as ends. On the other hand, consequentialist view claims that the moral worth of an action depends solely on its consequences, its effects on the good. In contrast to both views, we argue that non-instrumentalised relations form a non-reducible constituent of human well-being, which includes various kinds of self-relations. This might sound like Kant, but it isn't a view about morality, and it isn't incompatible with the claim that the results of our actions matter directly.

We have argued for a participatory democracy based on the premise that a good governance system must not instrumentalise persons, in contrast with non-participatory or representative systems that do instrumentalise persons. Thus a central political question for participatory governance is: How can people organise themselves well so that they can make collective decisions in ways that don't instrumentalise some people, or systematically favour some at the expense of others? A lot rides on the word 'well'.

Second, as just highlighted, the proposal embodies a distinction between reforms to the existing system and a new political structure. In brief, we are not proposing the addition of participatory democratic institutions, processes and practices to existing governance structures, as many writers do. For this reason, in early chapters, we deliberately avoided loaded terms such as 'citizen', 'the government' and 'the state'. This doesn't mean reforms are bad! It does mean that we recognise that the existing structure is inherently instrumentalising, and this indicates the need to see beyond it.

Third, our proposal is embedded in a social ontology that is not individualistic. Traditionally, liberal and conservative political philosophy is individualistic. This means that social change tends to be conceived in terms of a summation of individual actions; it means that justice is conceived in terms of individual rights; it means that political values have to be reduced to those of individual choice. We have tried to show the significance of avoiding individualism, and the importance of institutions and socio-economic structures. We have also tried to show that avoiding individualism doesn't require treating institutions and the community as super-entities that have non-derivative interests that can transcend or override the well-being of people. Rejecting individualism doesn't require embracing collectivism. We have also tried to show the idea of the epistemological virtues of the community as such. It also permits us to side-step the issues related to Arrow's (1950, 1951) impossibility theorem which assumes a summative approach to collective decisions and a preference theory of rationality (Pettit, 2008).

A fourth contribution of this work is that consensus-building is seen as part of the process of constructing a community. Consensus isn't simply unanimity or agreement in belief among a group of individuals. It is the decision of a community as such. To be so, the decision process cannot instrumentalise the participation of some groups within the community: for, if it were to do so, then it wouldn't be a decision of the community, but rather a decision of a ruling section of it. For a community to make decisions, it is necessary that there are supporting processes, such as various dialogues. Through such processes, the community can experience mutual and shared understanding, which is part of its strengthening and relational enrichment.

Fifth, the proposed system is based on a new holistic conception of well-being, which takes to heart the claim that human well-being is relational and multi-dimensional. This does not simply mean that the relationships and the communities we live in *cause* us well-being. It means that they must be conceptualised also as part of our lives. To reduce the second to the first is to instrumentalise the relational. For example, the causal claim that community life is an important contributing factor to our well-being reduces the community to an external cause of individualistic well-being. As such, it is simply a replaceable causal factor, subject to the

strictures of instrumental rationality. In contrast, community-life is part of our lives; it is a constituent component of our well-being rather than just an external cause.

Finally, the proposed system is based on an epistemology of peace. Peace doesn't require the absence of conflict. It requires that the people are willing to find ways to resolve, dissolve or transform conflicts non-antagonistically, in line with equality and well-being. This book has argued for a non-traditional epistemology that makes this possible. Traditional epistemology is belief-centred, which tends to be atomistic. It takes propositional contradiction as its unique model, which implies that at least one person is mistaken in a 'p versus not p' disputation. In contrast, with the concept of understanding, we can define spaces of various forms of greater understanding that transcend the atomism of a 'p-vs-not p' approach to belief. Furthermore, the proposed epistemology also requires the idea that the community embrace virtues such as respect, trust and goodwill in its quest for better consensus-based decisions. It is not merely individualistic.

Some Objections Revisited

In the literature, the main objection against participatory democracy is that it is impractical (e.g. Dahl, 1989; McLean, 1979; Levmoret, 2003). This criticism has very many variants and we can divide them into three kinds. The first is the organisational concerns. These argue that it is too difficult to organise a participatory system especially given the number of people involved is so great. Second, there are the complaints about people. The concern is that people are too divergent in their views, too obstreperous in their attitudes, too cantankerous in their relations and too ignorant in their understanding. In their motivation, people are typically too apathetic, disinterested, disaffected, and busy. Third, there are objections based on the fragility of a participatory system. We owe it to the aim of being idealistic in a realistic manner to respond to the spirit of these kinds of objections.

Let us start with the organisational ones. We have replied to these concerns in four ways. First, the proposed system separates meta-policy, policy and execution. Roughly, the assemblies decide the directives for making policy i.e. the meta-policy; the councils define the policy; and the executives implement it. Each deals with the relevant decisions at the appropriate level of generality in accordance with their roles. Second, there is a fundamental four-way distinction between facilitators, delegates, non-executive and executive officials, all of which tend to be blurred within existing political systems. All assembly meetings are professionally facilitated. The facilitator's isn't a passive role; the facilitator has the responsibility and power to guide the community through processes of consensus-building. The role of a dele-

gate is to enter other consensus-building processes on behalf of the local community, for instance at regional and national levels. As seen, the role of non-executive officials is to amplify the voice of the people in collective decision-making. And the role of the executive is to put it into practice. These roles are not that of a partisan politician. All four roles are non-partisan. However, their specifications should provide the role-holders with the discretionary power to make decisions based on the meta-policy directives of the people.

One objection is that the whole process will be time-consuming, and people will tend to become quickly disenchanted with the system, for example, as they often are with public bus services. The meetings will tend to be slow, and people will easily be disaffected with and apathetic about local assembly proceedings. However, the first two points about the proposed organisation mitigate these kinds of worries because there is a supporting structure that permits local communities to make their voice heard within the limitations of the group's capacities. As argued, the roles would amplify rather than diminish the power of the people. There is no doubt that assemblies and their various accompanying gatherings and meetings will be time-consuming compared to a representative system which seemingly only requires periodic voting. However, the work of a facilitator is to ensure that such discussions are not usually tiresome and draining. They don't need to be. On the contrary, being and discussing with others can be a deeply fulfilling process.

Third, the proposed system would create the conditions in which trust can flourish. The people know each other well as persons because of the supporting dialogues and healing processes. These help form a community. There are no antagonistic institutions such as political parties and press with vested interests. There is a political culture that embodies the collective virtues necessary for greater understanding. When trust breaks down, as it inevitably will, there are dialogue forums in which this can be addressed on its own terms, which means without party polemics and without mixing up the trust with the issue. When trust is in place, the people can delegate functions to officials etc. without this being a huge burden. Finally, as the community acquires a sense of its own agency, and as people feel part of a community, individual squabbles, conflicts of interest and differences of understanding are set within an entirely relational context which transforms their meaning. There would be an emerging sense of 'we'.

Many of the practical objections to a participatory system are about the nature of people, such as the claim that people are naturally selfish. The way these objections appeal to the concept of human nature is mistaken: there is no innate human nature independent of social conditions. Human nature consists in how we typically would be in different social conditions. On the one hand, in affirming this, we are not discarding the notion of human nature. Some version of such a notion is

required to articulate the concepts of needs, harm and well-being. For instance, we need the idea that human desire is not infinitely plastic; there are natural limits to the *deslogo* interests that a group or structure desires. By '*deslogo* interest', we mean the kind of patterns of what is non-instrumentally desirable as manifest in specific desires (cf. Thomson, 1986; Thomson, Gill and Goodson, 2020). However, such a notion does not depend on the claim that everyone shares a common set of such interests. Rather, it requires the idea that there are natural limits to the extent to which each person's desires can change because of social conditions. The degree to which these inescapable limits are shared is an empirical question. On the other hand, human nature so-conceived consists of a set of tendencies that are relative to social conditions (Thomson, 1986 Chapters 2 and 4). One can only conceive of human nature as manifest in a variety of social contexts. This is relevant to the objections to participatory democracy because it shows that pessimistic arguments based on claims about the inherent selfishness of human nature make an invalid leap. Such arguments cannot rely on empirical claims about how people are within the current system and under current conditions. Such claims don't tell us how people would be in a non-instrumentalising political system.

Additionally, the relevant counterfactual claims are difficult to verify or falsify. As we argued in a different context, this doesn't mean that they should be assigned to the bin of useless speculation (see Chapter 1, Gill and Thomson, 2019). Indeed, such counterfactual claims are very important. Despite these difficulties, there is good reason to believe that, within the proposed participatory system, in conjunction with non-instrumentalising educational and economic systems, and when supported by dialogues and healing processes, people would be more willing and able to participate peacefully in consensus-building. In short, they would be less obstreperous, less cantankerous, less egoistic and more understanding. Within a well-organised and well-managed participatory political system, people would feel that they are part of a community and would be more peaceful in community decision-making. Of course, this doesn't mean that consensus will be readily achieved. Rather, it entails that pessimistic objections based on current observations of human nature have limited applicability. They don't directly count.

An objection on similar lines runs as follows: even if people are currently wary and weary of politicians, they want authority figures who will act decisively on their behalf. Indeed, this point is a double-edged sword. On the one side, people like to have an authority who will take care of business for them because they don't want the responsibility for themselves. On the other side, they want such authority figures to moan and complain about, and to eventually rebel against, and to overthrow. Both kinds of desire would be largely frustrated in a participatory system. In essence, the reply to this objection consists in showing how a participatory system might overcome the political disenchantment that people currently suffer.

This can be shown that insofar as the current system instrumentalises, alienates and disenfranchises in ways that the proposed one wouldn't.

The third group of objections revolve around the vulnerabilities of the proposed system. It is open to being instrumentalised and abused itself. For instance, as we have seen, at the local level, won't some people hold the system hostage in order to bargain the removal of their veto for some political favour? The whole proposed system is fragile and subject to being instrumentalised through a coup. For example, ruthless persons might forge alliances to put allies in strategic roles and thereby to effectively form a dictatorship, under the blanket of participatory democracy. We may well imagine scenarios such as what follows. The person who is appointed COO for the assembly has discretionary power: part of their job to interpret the vague and sometimes perhaps contradictory recommendations of the assembly into policy, law and action. The COO might start to skew their interpretations, and form an informal alliance with some members of the community to block official censures and their removal from office. Likewise, the facilitator might also be in league with some factions within the assembly. In short, consensus allows for people with malicious intent to veto proposals that everyone except them agrees to. Insofar as the system presupposes trust, goodwill and respect, a person could try to undermine those qualities with a strategy to divide to conquer in order to capture the will of the community for their own ends.

The proposed system needs to be resilient against such instrumentalising alliances. This is why we suggested that there should be safety valves within the consensus-building processes that allow the assembly to switch to majority voting under certain conditions. Clearly, there will need to be laws that prevent people from being the paid agents of corporations and other vested interests. There will need to be laws that allow for dissent but which outlaw subversion so that the system wouldn't be open to a hostile takeover through processes of instrumentalisation. While, the system needs to be constructed on the assumption that people will instrumentalise or use each other sometimes, nevertheless, it will not be built on the presumption that they always will. The point is that the proposed system itself doesn't instrumentalise, and it doesn't require people in their public roles to instrumentalise others. This doesn't mean that people will stop instrumentalising; it simply means that instrumentalisation isn't built into the political structure and roles.

One of the other vulnerabilities of the proposal is the delegate system. At the regional and national levels, how can the delegates enter into meaningful discussions with each other without betraying the trust of their local assemblies? This becomes very important when the greatest differences of understanding are between regions rather than within local communities. As a result, won't the pro-

posed system be disposed to reflect the present kind of inequalities and injustices in which some areas and regions tend to be ignored?

The system needs to be better in these regards than the current representational democratic system at its best. And so it is. This is partly because, in the proposed system, there are institutional spaces for people to exercise their voices and ears, even beyond their local forums. If a group of local assemblies do not feel that they have been listened to, then there will not be a regional consensus, and the regional facilitator needs to propose practical solutions to the impasse, including deepening the conversation. Furthermore, the local assemblies can anticipate likely problems. They might send a delegation from local assembly A to attend as observers a meeting of local assembly B and vice versa. They might have joint meetings. Furthermore, they can install measures to ensure that the trust of their delegate remains unscathed. For example, they might send observers or a small delegation (with only one voice) to the region. Furthermore, the relevant dialogues will be established on a regular basis in order to retain goodwill and trust. This means that there will need to be informal dialogues with the local community. The proposed system is also better than the current representational one in part because it is designed to strengthen communities in which solidarity is not built on making someone else the enemy. There are no vested interests behind political parties to stoke up and manipulate antagonism because no political parties are running a government and no government running the state.

Towards Theories of Change

Suppose that we have replied well to these objections. There remains what may seem to be the fatal one, namely that political systems like the one described in this book will never be realised around the world. It is too idealistic. However, note how recourse to this objection seems to concede the two vital points, namely that the proposed system is better and that it can be made practical. Is it possible that political systems like the one described in this book might be realised around the world? Of course, it is *possible!* This reflects that the term 'possible' is so wide as to include all possibilities, including the improbable. However, we need to show that there is a reasonable road to participatory democracy and non-instrumentalised forms of governance, even if this is a long and uphill path. In brief, we need to propose a theory of change that charts this road.

We need to discard one possibility. The required changes won't happen through a violent revolution like those of 1789, 1917 and 1949. This is because the necessary institutional and cultural preconditions need to be in place, and these preclude an armed coup. These preconditions include respect, goodwill and

trust, which are antithetical to a violent upheaval. More violence won't eliminate antagonism. If a violent revolution were won, it would need to defend itself with more oppression, and it would thereby generate a new class of rulers. In short, such insurrections can replace one set of rulers with another, but they can't eliminate the need for rulers at all. This requires an entirely different kind of process.

Furthermore, the need for a participatory governance system is based on an axiology, an understanding of what matters and why. This implies that the transformative processes required for the new political system should not violate that axiology. Violent revolution is evaluatively inconsistent with peace, with the treatment of persons as persons. Likewise, strategies that instrumentalise politics are evaluatively inconsistent with a non-instrumentalised system.

Even given the will to make it happen, the road to a non-instrumentalised system is long. It requires at least three phases: 1) preparatory; 2) semi-implementation; 3) full implementation. In the preparatory phase, there need to be six types of coordinated change. The educational system will need to be transformed so that it is more consistent with the equal value of all persons and therefore, with the need for all to be able to participate in community decisions as equals. This requires an educational system that doesn't instrumentalise young people for the sake of economic growth and for the maintenance of the *status quo.* Second, existing political institutions need to be increasingly shielded from the pressures of economic interests. The existing democracy needs to be made more robust. This can be done in part by changing the laws governing the corporate financing of political campaigns. Third, in the preparatory phase, we can learn what works and what doesn't and why in terms of participatory processes. There is a lot to learn about how local communities can reach consensus, and how their consensus can be used to inform and construct policy positions. Practical experience and theoretical reflections on this experience are both lacking. In other words, we need local and regional experiments, which include the construction and use of mini-republics. The Internet can be a very important public space for the sharing of information between local and regional councils in the construction of wider consensus. Likewise, we need experiential understanding of dialogue groups, and of collective healing processes. People are angry and discontent because of long histories of being treated unjustly and inhumanely, of generations being without a voice. Therefore, we need dialogue and healing spaces to help people work through these grievances. Within many societies, people of different groups have a deep mistrust of each other because of the histories and because of the injustices of the current system. Therefore, the preparatory phase would include widespread dialogues to dissolve these build-up antagonisms. Fifthly, there will need to be systematic attempts to reduce poverty and inequality within the society. Finally, there would need to be legal interventions and institutional reforms to deescalate the ideological warfare that pervades

the existing system in most countries. For example, there are ways to ensure that mainstream media corporations don't have a financial interest in stirring up the pot. There are ways to ensure that the algorithms that govern internet searches don't contribute to polarization. One might estimate that it might take two generations for these reforms to reduce and heal the antagonisms and injustices of the current system.

We can imagine a phase of semi-implementation in which some important governmental decisions are handed over to local, regional and national assemblies. During this phase, there would be increased decentralisation of core policies and of taxation. There would be increasing reliance on the decisions of popular assemblies for more policy areas, without there being a full-scale dissolving of elected local, regional and national representational systems. "A proper republic is an elaborate piece of democratic architecture in which power grows up from the base of "popular" sovereignty."[61] During this phase, one of the big transitions is the dismantling of political parties and of the instrumentalization of mass media. Legislative changes can make these processes occur in phases or step-by-step. For example, there can be changes to party financing, lobbying, the power of the whips and changes to the legal form of media companies to render them non-profit and less partisan. Finally, the institution of the proposed system would need to consist in a new constitution, which would require many years of collaborative work.

Theory of Obstacles

These quickly sketched indications presuppose that there is the political will to make these changes in a sustained and systematic manner. Under the current system, the political will seemingly depend on the ruling classes and governing institutions. Given this, one might ask: 'Why would the ruling classes or groups or institutions be willing to give up power?' One way to answer it is by pointing out the potency of the kind of ethical value considerations outlined in this book. They establish a direction for what constitutes 'better' in this context. Arguably, the long-term historical trend has been and will be in this general direction. The ideas that the people are sovereign and that we are all equal are embedded in many cultures around the world. The understanding of what this implies politically will increasingly impinge on public awareness, even when this is manifest as anger and feelings of powerlessness and oppression. This suggests that, in the long term, there

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will be greater appreciation and understanding of this equality, and hence more widespread comprehension of the sovereignty of the people. Of course, such trends are only tendencies; they are not inevitable. Nevertheless, these tendencies will be present even when there are reversals that last several generations. The overall trend is based on what Hume pointed out, namely the surprising easiness by which the many are governed by the few which depends only on opinion. This means that these opinions that allow us to be ruled over can be undone with better society-wide understanding.

Limitations

We need to acknowledge and reiterate the limitations of this work. First, a new governance system has to include an allied set of transformations in the economic system and the educational system. As already suggested, these constitute huge topics beyond the scope of this book.

Second, a new political system, let us say, at a local, regional and national level would need to be integrated into a new global or transnational system. A full analysis and discussion of a new global or transnational political system is clearly a different work and, for this reason, we haven't discussed how the current governance system is unable to deal with fundamental transnational problems, such as global warming. Nevertheless, it is clear that, theoretically, in global governance, we need both communitarian and cosmopolitan principles. This is because it is both true that local communities are the primary site for participatory democracy and that we require institutions that are cosmopolitan because they recognise the equal value of all people irrespective of nationality. This work provides some implicit suggestions regarding transnational global governance.

Third, this book does not include extensive analysis of theories of social change, even though we briefly outlined some possibilities. Nevertheless, this book has not proposed reforms to make our society more democratic. It has tried to envisage a non-instrumentalising political system rather than piecemeal reforms. It has not laid out the pathways to the realisation of such a national participatory system.

Fourth, we have tried to identify the relevant fundamental principles and show how these can serve as a blueprint for the design of participatory democratic governance institutions These would vary between cultures. There will be important differences between a non-instrumentalised political system in different cultures and countries.

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