Book Reviews: Democratic Justice by Ian Shapiro; Democracy & Trust by Mark E. Warren; Democracy's Edges by Ian and Casiano Hacker-Cordon

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by force, however, one wishes von Hippel’s work included more discussion of how the prevailing political ideology of American administrations may influence its selective choice of forceful intervention and help shape America’s ultimate prospects for success.

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Democracy, Ian Shapiro and Casiano Hacker-Cordón tell us, is a “flawed hegemon.” Such a description suits our time, now more than a decade past the Velvet Revolution. With the fading of the end of the Cold War and the dawning of new challenges for democratic nations around the globe, the arrival of these three volumes (each first published in 1999) comes at a propitious time. Certainly the dilemmas that democratic theory evokes have been long apparent, but in many respects it seems suitable that a decade should have passed since 1989 to allow some additional critical detachment from the euphoria of democratic victories in Europe. Where these studies coincide is on the ground of defining and exploring the difficulties of working within a democratic framework where we also acknowledge other—often, competing—values. Now that democracy bestrides the world stage with no competitors for legitimacy, more than ever we are well to explore the democratic dilemma critically and carefully.
Democratic Justice by Shapiro seems by its title to evoke John Rawls's A Theory of Justice or Michael Sandel's Liberalism and the Limits of Justice, though Shapiro is careful to distinguish his conception of justice ("democratic moral intuitions") from their conceptions. Nevertheless, Shapiro is engaged in an allied enterprise—to puzzle out of our pluralist circumstances a standard to account for the justice and rightness of democracy. His effort focuses on defining justice as a "semicontextual ideal," a "middle ground between those who seek to derive principles of justice from abstract argument and those who appeal to the contingencies of context and history as the source of normative ideals" (25). This effort is related to a unique "life-cycle approach to social justice" that provides an organizational frame for Shapiro's book. The changing dynamics of power relationships over a human lifetime (principally between parents and children) elicit different conditions of justice according to circumstances—even if a person throughout those experiences may regard justice as a constant. Justice in this paradigm is contextual and yet abstractly constant within the concrete experience of human beings. Hence, justice is a "semicontextual ideal."

The balance of Shapiro's book develops this argument within four zones of the life cycle (justice applied to children, adults, work, and end-of-life issues). Throughout his focus remains on the challenge of bringing democracy and justice into harmony. Shapiro orients himself within a constellation of Rawls's political liberalism (understanding justice "politically, not metaphysically"), and Walzer's and MacIntyre's "contextualist" approaches. He is careful to distinguish democratic justice from these approaches and from "foundational political commitments" to emphasize that his conception is a "third way" that will "quell—and even draw on—understandable fears of the organized power of others" (28-29). This carefully drawn ground is admittedly the only reasonable place left for a democratic theorist to start, yet it is fraught with dangers that Shapiro cannot quite elude.

Shapiro's life-cycle approach to questions of social justice is perhaps most appropriate and most problematic where he comes to the heart of contemporary political debates about justice questions in his chapter on "Life's Ending." Here Shapiro asserts that "Life's ending mirrors its beginning," finding in this truth a "sequence of autonomy
and dependence" that brings the life cycle back to its beginning in a child’s dependence on parental care (196). Here Shapiro comes to the core of our problem (he acknowledges in this chapter that “the stakes are higher” [197]), and it is here that questions emerge concerning the durability of democratic justice. The chapter offers a detailed meditation on euthanasia scenarios, dwelling on the responsibility and obligations of physicians and family members to preserve life, and focusing on insulating terminally-ill individuals from pressures to end their lives for the convenience of those around them (“Proponents of democratic justice should be greatly concerned that a terminally ill person not be forced or manipulated into the decision to end his or her life” [229]). The chapter ends by “endorsing the conclusion that majority decisions should not stop a person from deciding to end his or her life” (229), a conclusion that exposes the difficulties attending this project. In the consideration of this moral issue—one that centers on the value and autonomy of human lives in a singular way—Shapiro’s rubric is not democratic justice but individual autonomy. Context, as he has constructed it, has dropped out of the picture with an appeal to a more abstract justice, unbounded by contextual considerations. Further, it is a principle of autonomy not far removed from a Kantian or Rawlsian conception according to which terminally-ill patients must be free from all coercion by their families, by their physicians, and by their fellow citizens in order to obtain relief despite any value the state or anyone else may place on their lives.

These considerations may do only minimal damage to Shapiro’s carefully crafted argument of a semicontextual ideal, since he recognizes that democracy is at some point bounded by justice (and vice-versa). The fact that life’s ending—surely, an extreme circumstance—exposes a moment where democracy is ill-suited to making decisions may vindicate the wisdom of Shapiro’s hedging democracy and justice against each other. Then again, it is fair to wonder why individual autonomy cannot trump democratic claims in other circumstances as well. Shapiro argues that death is irrevocable, and therefore life-ending decisions merit special terms. However, death is not life’s only irrevocable or high-stakes moment, and the arguments that remove democracy from that decision-making process may well prove useful elsewhere.
At the same time, it is not altogether clear that justice is the controlling paradigm where Shapiro asserts the autonomy of the terminally-ill patient against the pressures of democracy, expertise, or other exogenous factors. If justice is backstopping these arguments, it is not clear how this justice is to be defined beyond the idiosyncratic preferences of the individual. Surely it is not defined by the state, nor is it defined by communities or the voluntary associations that accumulate around what John Rawls has called "comprehensive doctrines" and others call religious traditions. Instead Shapiro’s arguments here bear the fingerprints of liberal arguments for individualism, an arena that may presuppose conceptions of justice but hardly indisputable or verifiable ones. If this is so, then Shapiro’s arguments have not eluded the "indeterminate controversy" in which liberalism also is mired (7).

None of this is to diminish Shapiro’s accomplishments in asserting the place of democracy alongside liberalism as arranging political institutions around a shared conception of justice rooted in the dignity of individuals who have the capacity to make decisions for themselves. The historical significance of democracy and liberalism lies in their debt to that dignity as a source of the legitimacy they enjoy, even if that dignity gives rise to a pluralism that makes justice impossible to define. Shapiro’s book deserves to rest alongside Rawls’s struggles with liberalism and justice, not so much for the answers it provides (like Rawls) but for the quality of the questions it raises.

Democracy and Trust explores a different problematic characteristic of democracy. Mark Warren has assembled a collection of essays attempting to describe the "paradoxical" relationship between democracy and trust by exploring such themes as trust in government, trust among citizens, and trust within voluntary associations. The problem here remains one of pluralism. At once we are confronted with the "democratic innovation" that "in many relationships trust is misplaced or inappropriate" (1) despite the fact that democracy cannot "do without trust" (2). The touchstone once again is liberal political institutions built on an absence of trust in the mechanisms of political power and those who control them. The challenge in this volume is to "harness" the "advantages of trust" (19) for democratic political systems.

The volume’s catalog of neoconservative, rational choice, and deliberative approaches to building and actualizing trust within a democ-
ratic framework will be familiar to most readers. It is for that reason, that the collection of these essays serves a useful purpose by organizing the materials topically and framing debates in a sensible way. Perhaps the two most provocative dilemmas that the volume presents are found in its very beginning and its very end in essays by Russell Hardin ("Do we want trust in government?") and Clause Offe ("How can we trust our fellow citizens?") about the desirability of trust in a democratic system, and between Jean Cohen ("Trust, voluntary association, and workable democracy") and Rom Harré ("Trust and its surrogates") on the persistent question about the role of civil society.

Russell Hardin raises worthy questions about the role of trust in a democracy on the ground of "mistaken inference" (24) and the complexities of modern governance: can a citizen ever be knowledgeable enough to trust government responsibly, or is "trust in government" merely an exercise in self-deception? Hardin defines trust as "to some extent" delegating power and responsibility to another party (35). He notes, echoing very familiar liberal sentiments about why government's power must be limited, that, "if we empower government enough to allow it to accomplish the tasks we delegate to it, we likely empower it to go well beyond our delegations" (35-36).

Where Hardin stands back from any moral content in trust and views it from a coolly objective perspective, Clause Offe is concerned deeply with "deficits" of trust in contemporary regimes as a failure of institutions to create confidence in its rules, values, and norms. "Trust," he tells us, "is the belief concerning the action that is to be expected from others" (47), and he notes the main difficulty with "a modern political community" is the fact that civic trust no longer can be "built upon actual acquaintance, [or] communal belonging" as they were in the city-states of the past (61). The dilemma becomes one of creating the confidence in fellow citizens and institutions that can produce salutary political behavior in the atomistic environment of contemporary politics. The Offe essay also points to a signal strength of this volume in the way that it interlocks with Cohen's and Harré's concerns about developing civil society as a source of trust without which modern regimes cannot thrive.

More than for its internal cohesion and a lively debate, however, *Democracy & Trust* also is significant for taking up the question of
democracy in relation to the too-often overlooked dimension of trust. Warren attributes the volume’s origin to a “short conference” at Georgetown University about democracy and trust, and it should be hoped that this collection of essays will not signal the end of this avenue of research which yet may yield much more fruit about the “enduring embarrassment of democratic theory” found at Democracy’s Edges, the title of another edited volume whose nature and approach lends itself to consideration alongside Democracy & Trust.

Ian Shapiro and Casiano Hacker-Cordón begin their volume bluntly with reassuring frankness that democratic theory is “impotent when faced with questions about its own scope” (1). This amounts to an admission of the truth that underlies all three of these volumes, and Democracy’s Edges is valuable for its effort to explore this truth candidly and without making any overt effort to resolve definitively the dilemma it expresses. The volume is organized into two sections, “Outer Edges” that concerns itself with the boundaries of democratic theory and the place of democracy on the world stage as a symbol of political legitimacy, while “Inner Edges” addresses questions of representation and democratic legitimacy.

On the international side, Democracy’s Edges embraces the full range of democratic crises (the precarious state of international institutions, the danger of ecological catastrophe, the moral challenges of globalism), while democracy’s inner edges are imaginatively charted through explorations of “enclave-seeking behavior” rooted in the politics of identity and the delicate balancing of varying self-expressions and conceptions of the good against one another. This is surely familiar territory, particularly in view of Shapiro’s Democratic Justice (he also has contributed a thoughtful essay here on “Group aspirations and democratic politics” that evokes Democratic Justice), but its familiarity does not prevent this comprehensive volume from making an impact.

If we take Shapiro’s and Hacker-Cordón’s introductory statement at face-value then the essays in Democracy’s Edges each face a clear challenge in their explorations of democratic theory. Whether the authors are exploring outer edges or inner edges, the guiding principle must be the effort to restore some articulateness to democracy about its scope and legitimacy. Robert A. Dahl explores this problem thoughtfully in relation to international organizations which are “not and probably can-
not be...democracies” (19), and instead represent “autonomous hierachies” possessing “greatly superior knowledge and virtue,” “definitely superior to democracy” and “useful” for political purposes (32-33). David Held considers globalization and the proposition that “the nature and prospects of the democratic polity need re-examination” (105). Held’s re-imagined polity would strip sovereignty away “from the idea of fixed borders and territories” and construct a system of “cosmopolitan governance” wherein “people would come to enjoy multiple citizenships...in the diverse political communities which significantly affect them” (107). On the side of inner edges, Jeffrey C. Isaac, Matthew F. Filner, and Jason C. Bivens respond to “the conflict of identities” within democratic politics and particularly in how the rise of the American Christian Right has challenged democratic theory for the “thinness” of its claim to legitimacy, seeking to “democratically engage[]” the discourse of the New Christian Right (256). In acknowledged contrast with Isaac, Filner and Bivens, Courtney Jung critiques the notion that democracy can be an inoculation against the divisions tolerated by liberalism among differing conceptions of the good.

All of the essays in this text, including those mentioned here, struggle with questions similar to those raised in Democratic Justice, but what is striking is how in so many ways the question returns once again to trust. Trust and the imprecise character of human knowledge of goods form a different sort of “veil of ignorance” beyond which neither liberal nor democratic politics has yet penetrated. The uncertainty that emerges from viewing democratic theory from its outer and inner edges further vindicates the location of trust as a critical area for study of democratic theory if conflicts between authority and democracy are to move beyond the suspicious glances that continue to be exchanged between those who look for a moral authority beyond democracy (as Dahl does) and those who seem comfortable that democracy can settle its own problems (such as Isaac, Filner and Bivens) using tools native to its history and necessary procedures. Yet how can trust emerge within the circumstances of pluralism, and how are we to move beyond the nagging recurrence of utility as a standard for applying democratic theory or hierarchical moral authority?

Each of these volumes is thought-provoking and worthwhile reading, yet finally none engages John Dewey’s observation that, “Democ-
racy is a form of government only because it is a form of moral and spiritual association." Beyond the lack of trust, beyond utility, beyond democratic deficits, beyond competing conceptions of the good lies a foundational and pre-political consideration that emerges first from common, lived experiences of rationality, and from shared hopes for dignity. Within this frame democratic theory need not be sheltered from (or even hedged against) a priori considerations, but rather depends on moral and spiritual considerations that precede all political arrangements. All of the authors collected in these volumes point toward this truth, yet the work of democratic theory that fully avails itself of those considerations has not yet been written.

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These three diverse books ask interesting questions about the status of women internationally. Feinman examines a split in the feminist movement between feminist anti-militarists and liberal feminists who seek equal opportunities within the military. Kelson and DeLaet compile a fascinating collection of essays that analyze the experience of women from primarily developing countries who immigrate to the developed nations of Australia, Canada, Israel, and the United States.