

explicitly the exclusions implicit in the traditions of democratic thinking on which their explanations and judgments rely.

Two Stories of Democracy

In his recently revised magisterial account of democracy, *Models of Democracy*, Held uses the notion of different models to present the competing ideas of the meaning of democracy within the Western tradition. I suggest that of the nine models Held explores there are two which are of overriding significance.⁸ The first is the familiar *liberal* model. The second is the *civic republican* model, in which the notion of citizen commitment and participation is crucial and which forms the inspiration for later models of participatory and direct democracy. I will not attempt to emulate Held's nuanced and scholarly categorisation in explicating what I identify as the two dominant models. To do so, I will fall back on the key resource of modern political theorising since Hobbes—story telling. There are two stories of two different kinds of social contract which are very well known to political theorists: I locate the story of liberal democracy in the work of Locke and Kant and the story of civic republicanism in the work of Rousseau.⁹ None of these thinkers believed in or advocated democracy as a form of government in the sense that it is most commonly understood today, that is, one which involves some element of participation of all the competent population in government policy and decision making processes, even if only through universal suffrage and regular elections. The institutional and practical history of democracy both pre-dates and post-dates the stories I am presenting. Nevertheless, as I will demonstrate, these thinkers do provide reference points for the meaning of democracy within modernity and a useful way into the tensions with which attempts to realise and measure democracy are always plagued.

The Lockean/Kantian story goes something like this: once upon a time there were propertied individuals living in the insecurity of a state in which right (already known through natural law or practical reason) could not be guaranteed; these individuals banded together to set up a state in order to protect the moral requirements of right, which were largely identified with an individual's rights over his own person and property. The hallmarks of this state included the rule of law, limited and representative of government, the notion of citizen rights, the distinction between active and passive citizens and clear public/private and state/civil society distinctions.¹⁰ This state, in securing property, encourages the flourishing of trade and, in institutionalising accountability of government, discourages war.¹¹

The Rousseauian story is rather different: once upon a time people in a state of nature realised that they were faced with obstacles to survival which could not be overcome by individual striving but needed to be tackled collectively. To

8. Held, *op. cit.*

9. J. Locke, *Two Treatises of Government* (London: Everyman, 1924); J.J. Rousseau, *The Social Contract and Discourses* (London: Everyman, 1973); I. Kant, in H. Reiss (ed.), *Political Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

10. Locke, *op. cit.*, pp. 179–198; Kant, *op. cit.*, pp. 136–154.

11. Kant, *op. cit.*, pp. 164–175.

overcome these obstacles individuals in the state of nature had to resolve the problem of how to become a people and yet to retain the natural individual liberty to which they were attached.¹² The answer to the problem was found in the social contract which, on Rousseau's own—admittedly less than rigorous—account, constructs a people and is then sustained by that people as sovereign through the general will, at the level of constitutional law rather than of government regulation.¹³ This means that autonomy at the level of the individual will becomes transformed into autonomy at the level of the collective will. The hallmarks of this state are small size, minimal material inequality, collective will, active citizenship, and common culture and characteristics. Unlike Kant, Rousseau did not discuss the likelihood of a society based on his social contract being warlike or pacifist. Nevertheless, his comment on the possibility and desirability of a confederation of European states indicates that, where both similarities of culture and common strategic and commercial interests coincide, such a confederation makes sense for any state whether it is one in which the people are sovereign or not.¹⁴

Elements of the above two stories form the poles between which modern accounts of democracy, understood as the rule of the people, oscillate. It could be argued that the extremes of the two poles in contemporary debate are marked by Schumpeterian liberal democracy at one end and versions of participatory, direct democracy at the other.¹⁵ Let us move on to a brief account of the shortcomings of each model, distinguishing between two aspects. The first are features specific to each model, i.e., weaknesses and tensions which are inherent in the model in question. Here, as will be seen, the problems point to the complementary strengths and weaknesses of liberal versus civic republican conceptions. The second, are features which are common to both models. These concern the external conditions of possibility of democracy implicit in both of the stories told above. The latter, I go on to argue, point towards problems with utilising notions of democracy and assessing processes of democratisation which have been less well explored in existing democratic theory literature than the implications of the former. However, both the specific and the common problems to which I draw attention provide lessons for international relations scholars making claims about democracy in explanatory and normative work.

The Critique of the Models of Democracy

The shortcomings of liberal democracy have been the subject of critique since Rousseau's famous claim that Englishmen were free only once every five years when they cast their vote.¹⁶ Rousseau's point has been repeated by successive generations of critics and has been reiterated in relation to post-1945 elite and

12. Rousseau, *op. cit.*, p. 174.

13. *Ibid.*, pp. 191–193.

14. Rousseau, "Extract of the Abbe de Saint-Pierre's Project for Perpetual Peace", in C.E. Vaughan (trans. and ed.), *A Lasting Peace Through a Federation of Europe* (London: Constable, 1917), excerpted in H. Williams, M. Wright and T. Evans (eds.), *International Relations and Political Theory* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1993), pp. 100–111.

15. Sorenson, *op. cit.*, pp. 9–16.

16. Rousseau, *The Social Contract and Discourses*, *op. cit.*, p. 240.