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**9th Gerald Stourzh Lecture
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**Inventing Democracy:
Participation in Political Thought**

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The history of human rights and democracy is a major field of activity in which the Faculty of Historical and Cultural Studies at the University of Vienna is engaged. Gerald Stourzh, professor emeritus of modern history and one of the most renowned Austrian historians of his generation, has prominently positioned the history of human rights and democracy at the University of Vienna during nearly three decades of research and teaching. At the same time, his academic achievements in the field have provided profound and lasting incentives internationally. In the annual *Gerald Stourzh Lectures on the History of Human Rights and Democracy* distinguished scholars present new insights in this field and put them up for discussion.

The lectures are published at http://www.univie.ac.at/gerald-stourzh-lectures.

Abstract

A standard narrative of the rise of democracy takes its modern incarnation to be based on an attempt to revive the ancient ideal of citizen self-rule, exemplified by popular participation. From the seventeenth century through to the 'age of revolutions', popular sovereignty is assumed to have made steady progress towards democratic government. Yet this story carries within it a range of simplifications. Paramount among these is the equation between government by the people and participation in public life. In the pages that follow, I trace some key episodes in how participation has been understood and evaluated in the past, analysing the sometimes-fraught relations between civic engagement and popular government spanning ancient and modern democracies.

I. Introduction

It is a genuine honour for me to be delivering the ninth annual Gerald Stourzh Lecture on the History of Human Rights and Democracy. Although I met Prof. Stourzh for the first time this afternoon, I already enjoy an inevitable kinship with him. Most obviously, we both work on the history of legal and political thought, with a focus on the eighteenth century.[1] In addition, we have both written on the "nationalities" problem in European history.[2] And finally, we share a longstanding interest in democracy, the topic about which I am to speak today.[3] In all of the fields I have mentioned, I am a relative newcomer, whereas Gerald Stourzh helped to open up the territory.

As befits the theme of this lecture series, my subject is "Inventing Democracy". I am aware of the potential impression of glibness that such a title might at first communicate. So, let me clarify at the outset: by "invention" I do not mean spontaneously willed creation. Democracy was not the product of deliberate design. Nonetheless, it was brought about by processes of action and reaction – and it must

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[1] See the important collection by Gerald STOURZH, From Vienna to Chicago and Back: Essays on Intellectual History and Political Thought in Europe and America (Chicago, Ill. 2007).

[2] Gerald STOURZH, Die Gleichberechtigung der Nationalitäten in der Verfassung und Verwaltung Österreichs, 1848-1918 (Vienna 1985).

[3] Most recently on this theme, see Gerald STOURZH, Die moderne Isonomie: Menschenrechtsschutz und demokratische Teilhabe als Gleichberechtigungsordnung (Vienna/Cologne/Weimar 2015).

therefore be understood as a human artefact. Consequently, although it is not the intended outcome of a clear plan, it is an invention insofar as it resulted from human struggle.

Yet, more than this, democracy was not invented just once, but twice. It first emerged among the ancients, and then again among the moderns. Was modern democracy constructed in the image of its ancient predecessor? I want to suggest this evening that things were not that simple. As I do so, I shall also be arguing that popular power is only one constituent element of representative democracy. Its other components often protect against pure democratic decision-making. Beginning historical research on the assumption that the direct power of the people either was (say, in Mably or Rousseau) or ought to be (for us today) a model for our politics seems to me to risk accepting the premise that current arrangements should in some way approximate the example of the ancients, and that, consequently, participation should be regarded as the definitive democratic value. These assumptions are supported by a pervasive historical narrative, which traces the "rise of the people" over three successive centuries – beginning in the seventeenth, blossoming in the eighteenth, and fully flowering in the aftermath of the "age of revolutions".[4] In this lecture, I want to argue that, just as widespread conceptions of participation are fanciful, so the rise-of-the-people narrative is an historical simplification.

II. Participation in Twentieth-Century Political Thought up to the 1960s

The significance of participation began to be explored in academic circles in the 1950s, and then again from the mid-1960s with an added sense of purpose. Some of the earlier discussion was conducted against a background of alarm about the engagement of Western electorates in the political process: apathy seemed to be undermining full democratic legitimacy, public opinion to be an object of political manipulation, and elites to be taking the lead in the direction of affairs.[5] In the midst

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[4] The most influential account of the advent of democracy with the age of revolutions is R. R. PALMER, The Age of Democratic Revolution: A Political History of Europe and America, 1760–1800 (Princeton 1959–64), 2 vols.

[5] Seymour Martin LIPSET, Paul F. LAZARSFELD, Allen H. BARTON and Joan J. LINZ, The Psychology of Voting: An Analysis of Political Behaviour. In: Gardner LINDZEY (ed.), Handbook of Social Psychology (Cambridge, Mass. 1954); C. Wright MILLS, The Power Elite (New York 1956); William KORNHAUSER, The Politics of Mass Society (Glencoe, Ill. 1959); Seymour Martin LIPSET, Political Man: The Social Bases of Politics (Garden City, N.Y. 1960); Angus CAMPBELL, The Passive Citizen. In: Stein ROKKAN (ed.), Approaches to the Study of Political Participation (Bergen 1962); Giuseppe DI PALMA, Apathy and Participation: Mass Politics in Western Societies (New York 1970).

of these anxieties, evidence for participation was widely sought – encompassing psychological investment on the part of citizens, the distribution of voting habits across the population, and the extent of meaningful influence exercised by the public.[6] The measure of participation was invoked to judge the credibility of the aspiration to popular government. Opinions were naturally divided on how "inclusive" the democratic process was, sparking criticism of the pretentions of liberal democracy as well as defences of its comparative merits as a system of government.[7] Carole Pateman emerged as an early and trenchant critic, Robert Dahl as a determined and innovative defender.[8] Both focused on the activity of public participation – Pateman on the virtues of direct participation, Dahl on the scope for inclusion held out by representative government. For inspiration, Pateman looked back to Fabians like G. D. H. Cole, Dahl to Madisonian ideas presented in the *Federalist Papers.* Partly as a consequence of this, participation had different meanings for each side.[9] For Pateman, it helped to cultivate the political virtues and improve the sense of community; for Dahl, it enabled forms of activity that kept rulers in check. As Dahl put it in a collaborative volume in the 1950s: "The question, then, is not so much whether citizens are active but whether they have the opportunity to exert control through activity when they wish to do so".[10]

Thus participation, as with Pateman, might mean active engagement in public life, directly sharing in the decision-making process; or, as with Dahl, it might mean the threat of wielding influence over the actions of officials. Divergence over these two perspectives intensified through the 1960s and 1970s. Partisans began to arm themselves with rival historical narratives. One side spoke of the decline or loss of the participatory ideal, the other of the gradual rise of popular influence. Representatives of the first camp include disparate personalities, ranging from Hannah Arendt to J. G. A. Pocock and Quentin Skinner. For all the intellectual distance between these figures, each regarded the modern state as having entailed the loss of political

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[6] Sidney VERBA, Norman H. NIE, Participation in America: Political Democracy and Social Equality (New York 1972); Sidney VERBA, Norman H. NIE, Jae-on KIM, The Modes of Democratic Participation: A Cross-National Comparison (Beverly Hills, Calif. 1971).

[7] For a retrospective, see Harry ECKSTEIN, Civic Inclusion and Its Discontents. In: Daedalus 113:4 (1984) 107-145.

[8] Carole PATEMAN, Participation and Democratic Theory (London 1970); Robert A. DAHL, Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition (New Haven, Conn./London 1971).

[9] See Lawrence A. SCAFF, Two Concepts of Political Participation. In: The Western Political Quarterly 28 (1975) 447-462.

[10] Robert A. DAHL, Charles E. LINDBLOM, Politics, Economics and Welfare (New York 1953) 309.

virtue.[11] From this perspective, participation was largely seen as a cost free political asset which modern history had nonetheless progressively compromised. However, for others – like Seymour Martin Lipset, Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba – modern democracy could be explained in terms of a "participation explosion" which could be managed under conditions of socio-economic prosperity, accompanied by the appropriate "civic culture". Almond and Verba complained that Lipset ignored this civic dimension, prioritising the effects of economic "modernisation". Yet it is clear that each of these figures believed that successful democracy in Britain and America depended on psychological traits, like tolerant attitudes, and on levels of educational achievement.

In thinking about what participation has come to mean, and what it originally meant, I want to begin with the standard account of the progress of modern democracy. One highly influential version appeared in 1942, in the first edition of Joseph Schumpeter's *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*. Although written at the mid-point of the War, the book became incredibly influential during its aftermath, not least for its analysis of the nature of democracy. Its effects were to be felt from William Riker to Adam Przeworski.[12] Yet the work was originally intended as a study of feasible socialism.[13] Notoriously, in the published version of the text, this was prefaced by an account of the trajectory of capitalism. But it also included an examination of the democratic method. Socialism, Schumpeter projected, would "inevitably" emerge from the "equally inevitable" disintegration of the capitalist order.[14] Relations between socialist ideals and democratic principles were historically complex and ambivalent. Did Marx expect his vision to proceed by democratic means? Even if the answer to this question is uncertain, at least some parties committed to socialist values had reconciled themselves to the routine procedures of democracy. Yet what exactly did these comprise, Schumpeter pondered? This took him into furnishing a narrative of democratic development.

It is an interesting fact that, up until the end of the Cold War, accounts of the development of democracy were largely generated by social scientists. Accordingly, in

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[11] Hannah ARENDT, The Human Condition (Chicago, Ill. 1958). J. G. A. POCOCK, The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition (Princeton, N.J. 1975); Quentin SKINNER, Liberty before Liberalism (Cambridge/New York 1998).

[12] William H. RIKER, Liberalism Against Populism (Oxford 1982); Adam PRZEWORSKI, Susan STOKES, Bernard MANIN (eds.), Democracy, Accountability and Representation (Cambridge/New York 1999).

[13] Thomas K. MCCRAW, Prophet of Innovation: Joseph Schumpeter and Creative Destruction (Cambridge, Mass. 2007) 348.

[14] Joseph A. SCHUMPETER, Preface (1942) to Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy [1942] (London/New York 1994) 409.

his 1991 study of what he termed "third wave" democratisation, Samuel P. Huntington briefly sketched the history of democracy without reference to a single historical text. The core idea, he claimed, went "back to the Greek philosophers".[15] In its modern form it could be dated to the American and French Revolutions, although the first "push" towards these events emerged a century before. In due course, the eighteenth-century revolutions triggered the first "wave" of democracy, followed by two further stages of expansion.[16] My point is that this narrative is instantly recognisable, since it perfectly replicates the story outlined in Schumpeter. In chapter twenty of *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, in the process of groping toward a "definition" of democracy, Schumpeter outlines a schematic account of its main lines of descent. After distinguishing the meaning of popular participation in tribal societies and the Greek polis, he moves to the modern meaning of rule by the people, and concludes that the application of the idea is crowded with difficulties. Rule by the people in complex societies might more credibly be viewed as "government approved by the people".[17] Yet this, on reflection, covers multiple possibilities, including a litany of autocratic administrations supported by general acclamation. It is at this point that Schumpeter resorts to history.

Modern democracy begins, Schumpeter proposes, with seventeenth-century philosophical attempts in Europe to make the idea of popular accountability fit with the institutional realities of the modern monarchical state. These attempts took the form, he writes, of "'legal' theories of democracy", by which he basically meant contractual models of state formation.[18] From this perspective, the contractual hypothesis, as variously elucidated by assorted natural lawyers, provided a means of linking existing arrangements with the legitimating ideal of popular sovereignty. This project gained traction, Schumpeter presumed, under conditions where opposing doctrines like that of the divine right of kings began to lose persuasive power. In England, it soon acquired still greater force after the monarchy was settled by parliamentary decree during the Glorious Revolution – at a time when, allegedly, ancient Greek ideas about politics were being revived. In this way, political developments and ideological innovation had conspired to align democratic principles with existing regimes. Yet this alignment, Schumpeter went on, was based

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[15] Samuel HUNTINGTON, The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century (Norman, OK 1991) 5.
[16] Ibid., 13-16.
[17] SCHUMPETER, Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy, 246.
[18] Ibid., 247.

on spurious legal doctrines that conflated dispersed individuals in society with the juridical fiction of a corporate people.[19] Such an approach could never render the ideal of popular representation intelligible. Yet over time, aided by Rousseau's conception of the "volonté générale", and still more by the claims of Benthamite utilitarianism to be able to capture objectively the common good, the aspiration to government by the will of the people achieved its classical formulation.

The Schumpeterian narrative presents us with the story of the steady rise of the people to political power, a process accompanied by a series of "democratic" doctrines and confirmed by the march of political events, both allegedly influenced by the underlying progress of capitalist development. Following late nineteenth-century assumptions about the origins of democratic thought, two philosophers are singled out for their decisive impact on modern ideas: Rousseau and Bentham. By 1942, this was a well-established pedigree. In Moisei Ostrogorski's *Democracy and the Organisation of Political Parties*, the advent of democracy is associated with government in the interest of "the greatest number". Moreover, Rousseau's "general will" is duly equated with Bentham's thesis.[20] A generation earlier, in the context of controversy surrounding the extension of the franchise in Britain, Henry Sumner Maine had related Rousseau and Bentham as unwitting conspirators in the promotion of democratic values.[21] While Schumpeter, adopting this perspective, accepted that prevailing assumptions about the nature of democracy originated here, he went on to denounce the results for their incoherence. This led him to criticise, first, the idea of a common good existing independently of the will of all and, second, the notion that this can be realised through representatives of the people.

Schumpeter was setting himself against two schools of thought: first, the utilitarian conception of rationally deliberating individuals destined to arrive at shared objectives by a process of independent calculation; and second, the idea of the popular will implicit in some of the writings of the German Historical School, which Schumpeter had been taught to disdain as a student of political economy. In 1883 the leading Austrian advocate of marginalist economic theory, Carl Menger, inveighed against the notion of an abstract people's will which he ascribed to the proponents of German "national" economics. A population comprised nothing other than the play of

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[19] Ibid., 247-248.
[20] Moisei OSTROGORSKI, Democracy and the Organisation of Political Parties. Translated from the French by Frederick CLARKE. With a preface by James BRYCE (New York 1902), vol. 1, 35 and vol. 2, 674-675.
[21] Henry Sumner MAINE, Popular Government [1885]. With an introduction by George W. CAREY (Indianapolis, IN 1976) 23, 167.

individual wills, and could not plausibly be interpreted as expressing a common identity. Social processes were the product of "individual factors", Menger insisted, carrying the implication that the general will was a fabrication.[22] In this vein, Schumpeter challenged the notion that democratic volition subsisted beneath the choices of individuals in society.[23] More conspicuous was his challenge to the tradition of Bentham and Mill, which he construed as proposing that rational calculation among the many would unfailingly conduce toward an agreed objective, the common welfare or general happiness. In the world of affairs conducted by fallible human beings, "rifts on questions of principle" will always intrude.[24] So how then, if not on the basis of utilitarian theory, do democratic politics actually function?

To answer this question, Schumpeter drew on a tradition of political psychology that had sought to expose the irrationalities of the democratic "crowd". From Gustave Le Bon and Gabriel Tarde to Vilfredo Pareto, the impulsive nature of human volition had been subject to investigation. Much of this was intended to disabuse democratic enthusiasts. Yet in seeking to dismantle the legacy of rational egoism in Bentham-Mill, it was above all Graham Wallas to whom Schumpeter turned. Unlike Le Bon, Wallas strove to improve the long-term prospects for democracy, yet he insisted that this would require significant revision of the philosophical psychology which utilitarianism had made dominant in the Oxford of his youth. Section 3 of Chapter 21 of *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy* was named after Wallas's 1908 book, *Human Nature in Politics*. Schumpeter claimed that the concerns of the modern citizen were remote from affairs of state. In the language of William James, which had already been adopted by Wallas, Schumpeter claimed that the "pungent sense of reality" was inoperative among the mass of the population in the sphere of politics.[25] A creature of impulse rather than rational deliberation, the democratic individual did not possess a definite "will" in public life. The citizen, instead, is liable to revert to "primitive" and "infantile" modes of inference – purely affective and associative in nature.[26] Reasoned calculation and responsibility are

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[22] Carl MENGER, Untersuchungen über die Methode der Sozialwissenschaften und der Politischen Ökonomie insbesondere (Leipzig 1883) 167-8.

[23] SCHUMPETER, Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy, 252: "that 'soul of the people' which the historical school of jurisprudence made so much of".

[24] Ibid., 251.

[25] Ibid., 261. Cf. Graham WALLAS, Human Nature in Politics [1908] (London 1929), 42, citing William JAMES, The Principles of Psychology (New York 1890), vol. 2, 547.

[26] SCHUMPETER, Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy, 262.

reduced. In the process, voters grow more vulnerable to the machinations of opinion formers: the will of the people is effectively "manufactured".[27]

Before the First World War, Wallas had sought to combine the insights of Darwin and William James in a final assault on the dying assumptions that supported the "intellectualist" fallacy.[28] This was the idea that behaviour is driven by the selection of coherent means to realise determinate ends.[29] Although this conception had dominated political economy for generations, it had come under suspicion since the 1870s: "Impulse, it is now agreed, has an evolutionary history of its own earlier than the history of those intellectual processes".[30] Many actions were motivated by instinct rather than forethought, and these could be understood as tendencies of the mind bequeathed to human nature as evolutionary survivals. Science through the ages had endeavoured to replace mere inclinations with rational planning. However, the project had made little headway in the field of politics.[31] As a result, the ideal of the independent and disinterested voter championed a decade earlier by Ostrogorski and James Bryce was inapplicable under conditions of universal suffrage.[32] As a matter of fact, "most of the political opinions of most men are the result, not of reasoning tested by experience, but of unconscious or half-conscious inference fixed by habit".[33] In the face of this, one might hope, as H. G. Wells had wanted, to administer the masses by an aristocracy of skilled technocrats.[34] However for Wallas this was little better than a neo-Platonic fantasy, rendered redundant by the British experience of government in India: a collection of even scrupulous civil servants would remain entranced by its own system of introverted prejudice as it encountered the world of Indian opinion.[35] Consent had proved a requirement of stable government. The problem remained the character of judgement among rulers and the quality of opinion among the ruled.

Schumpeter, two generations later, was not enamoured of either. The democratic "method" determined that a class of rulers acquired "the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people's vote".[36] Neither participant in this

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[27] Ibid., 263. The phrase goes back to Walter LIPPMANN, Public Opinion (New York 1922).
[28] WALLAS, Human Nature in Politics, vii.
[29] Ibid., 98.
[30] Ibid., 25. For the impact of this shift on political economy, see 12-13, 140-143.
[31] Ibid., 114, 153.
[32] Ibid., 126.
[33] Ibid., 103.
[34] H. G. WELLS, A Modern Utopia (New York 1905) 263.
[35] WALLAS, Human Nature in Politics, 201-204.
[36] SCHUMPETER, Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy, 269.

trade is necessarily inspiring. The populace, on one side, is the bearer of attitudes. These are not the product of rational deliberation, but are a bundle of often poorly articulated preferences. Schumpeter never denied that these desires exist.[37] However, their expression, and sometimes their existence, depends on their adoption by a party. Thus, opinion is the outcome of dialogue with rival leaderships. Schumpeter is associated with a jaded view of the demand side of this equation: the electorate is depicted as an overly-trusting consumer. However, his account of the supply side is not uplifting either: "all parties will of course […] provide themselves with a stock of principles or planks and these principles or planks may be as characteristic of the party that adopts them and as important for its success as the brands of goods a department store sells are characteristic of it and important for its success. But the department store cannot be defined in terms of its brands and a party cannot be defined in terms of its principles".[38] Behind the commercial enterprise, stands profit; and behind the political slogan, stands power. Neither is primarily concerned with the welfare of its beneficiaries, and their aptitudes as entrepreneurs are rarely exceptional. Such scepticism, of course, is as old as Plato's *Gorgias*: both sides are degraded by the business of politics. Plato, however, goes further. Political campaigning is an exercise in flattery conducted via the medium of speech. As a result, the rhetoric of the orator is shaped by his audience.[39]

In the end, Schumpeter views the game of politics differently. The dealer in votes is for the most part an unprepossessing figure. Yet, even so, the lead in affairs always lies with party bosses and campaigners. Viewed from this angle, liberal democracies are secure if unedifying in character. Competition is restricted; the customers are distracted; and politicians usually operate within comfortable routines, even if initiative and leverage is on their side. Under these circumstances, it would seem that public opinion poses little threat to stability. Schumpeter was aware of the reality of persecution – from the republic of Geneva in the age of Calvin to Massachusetts in the colonial period. He also wrote of anti-Semitism as a kind of popular bigotry. At one point he cited Suetonius's approval of Nero's mistreatment of the Christians as an example of prejudice that originated in the population at large.[40]

Nonetheless, for the most part Schumpeter represents the populace as docile. On this interpretation, participation is superfluous, but also harmless as a result. In

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[37] Ibid., 270.
[38] Ibid., 283.
[39] PLATO, Gorgias, ed. by E. R. DODDS (Oxford 1959), 464d9-465a5.
[40] SCHUMPETER, Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy, 240-241.

general, such complacency declined rapidly after the war. In numerous Cold War publications, the dangers associated with "mass" politics were trailed. The problem that commentators had in mind was that of mass participation, articulated in studies of "totalitarianism" as well as accounts of the development of modern democracy.[41] In the mid-to-late 1960s and beyond, the values of commitment and protest re-emerged as staple elements of political virtue. Some of this vocabulary overlapped with older idioms centred around the ideal of public spiritedness. In the same period, inspired by political thinkers from Franz Neumann and Hannah Arendt to Sheldon Wolin, the ideal of civic engagement was celebrated in political philosophy, and featured in the history of political ideas.[42] Yet for many political scientists in the decades after the Second World War, participation was an ambivalent commodity. In part their doubts arose from attempts to analyse National Socialism and Bolshevism.

In 1959 William Kornhauser explored the "social conditions that sustain liberal democratic institutions".[43] The argument implied that such an arrangement might collapse under adverse circumstances. Weakness stemmed from the need to govern in an age of mass participation. When "large numbers of people" engage in political activity that is extra-constitutional in character, the system is threatened with implosion. Kornhauser commented: "Modern democratic systems possess a distinct vulnerability to mass politics because they invite the whole population, most of which has historically been politically quiescent, to engage in politics".[44] The contrast with the mood that spread from the mid-1960s is striking. Statements of the kind become gradually unimaginable in the aftermath of decolonisation, student agitation, and the popular protest movements of the era. This is partly a matter of perspective: analysts and observers a decade earlier, still vividly recalling the spectacle of intense commitment in Germany and the Soviet Union, were disposed to reflect more gloomily on the drama of participation in politics. Seymour Martin Lipset put it bluntly: "The belief that a very high level of participation is always good

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[41] Hannah ARENDT, Authority in the Twentieth Century. In: The Review of Politics 18 (1956) 403-417; Carl J. FRIEDRICH, The Unique Character of Totalitarian Society. In: IDEM (ed.), Totalitarianism (Cambridge, Mass. 1954) 47-60; Emil LEDERER, State of the Masses (New York 1940); Jacob L. TALMON, The Origins of Totalitarian Democracy: Political Theory and Practice during the French Revolution and Beyond (London 1952).

[42] Jürgen HABERMAS, Die Klassische Lehre von der Politik in ihrem Verhältnis zur Sozialphilosophie. In: IDEM, Theorie und Praxis: Sozialphilosophische Studien (Neuwied am Rhein/Berlin 1963) 13-51; J. G. A. POCOCK, Machiavelli, Harrington and English Political Ideologies in the Eighteenth Century. In: IDEM, Politics, Language, and Time: Essays on Political Thought and History (Chicago, Ill. 1971) 104-147.

[43] William KORNHAUSER, The Politics of Mass Society, 7.

[44] Ibid., 227.

for democracy is not valid".[45] The example he chose to demonstrate his point was 1930s Germany where cohesion declined with the rise of fervent engagement. It became common to argue that, by comparison with instability and unrest, apathy had its charms.[46] However, for political sociologists like Almond and Verba, there was no reversing the "rise-of-the-people" trend, which was already an international norm: "In all the new nations of the world the belief that the ordinary man is politically relevant – that he ought to be an involved participant in the political system – is widespread".[47] Yet they also believed that a population had to be made safe for democracy.

This meant that while active participation in politics was to a certain extent a positive element in democracies, it had to be tempered by countervailing forces. A successfully democratic culture should be "mixed" in such a way that passivity would have a role to play.[48] Heightened political passion, triggered by intense involvement in potentially divisive issues, had to be held in check. This was an awkward message for the devotees of popular government: the people had to be present, yet somehow neutered. This attitude laid claim to, but also disavowed, the rhetoric of popular power. It placed participation centre stage whilst also accepting that it brought with it challenges and dangers. Historically, participation broadly conceived had not been the exclusive preserve of democratic regimes. Government, according to Hume, depends on opinion, and to that extent all regimes rely on popular involvement – ranging from acclamation to mere acceptance, and from criticism to loyal dissent.[49] However, gradually over the course of the nineteenth century, partisans of democracy sought to claim it for themselves. The supremacy of numbers, Ostrogorski commented, was the defining feature of modern democracy.[50] The mode of participation, James Bryce added, was remote from the city-states of yore.[51] It was recognised accordingly that in the modern case the issue was not simply one of taking part in the political process so much as a matter of discovering what *democratic*

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[45] LIPSET, Political Man, 32.

[46] On this, see Herbert TINGSTEN, Political Behaviour: Studies in Election Statistics. Translation from Swedish by Vilgot HAMMARLING (London/Stockholm 1937); W. H. Morris JONES, In Defence of Political Apathy. In: Political Studies 2 (1954) 25-37.

[47] Gabriel A. ALMOND, Sidney VERBA, The Civic Culture. Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations (Princeton 1963) 4.

[48] Ibid., 474.

[49] David HUME, Of the First Principles of Government (1742). In: IDEM, Essays Moral, Political and Literary. Edited and with a Foreword, Notes, and Glossary by Eugene F. MILLER, with an appendix of variant readings from the 1889 edition by T. H. GREEN and T. H. GROSE (Indianapolis, IN 1985) 32

[50] OSTROGORSKI, Democracy and the Organisation of Political Parties, 3.

[51] James BRYCE, Preface to ibid., xl.

participation entailed. For Ostrogorski and Bryce, it ought to involve free deliberation among an independent-minded electoral mass, whereas in fact the machinations of party effectively managed popular opinion. For Wallas and Schumpeter, the ideal of the rationally deliberating voter was a utopian projection. The gentleman-citizen and the gentleman-politician were inapplicable in the democratic age.

III.   Participation and Popular Government in Ancient and Eighteenth Century Political Thought

The distinction between participation in politics and specifically democratic modes of involvement has largely been missed by existing histories of democracy which for the most part follow the Schumpeterian narrative. As we have seen, this begins with the rise of democratic ideas in the seventeenth century, followed by their triumph during the American and French Revolutions, which then steadily expanded over the next hundred and fifty years. It is commonly assumed that these developments represent a species of revival, as a result of which ancient ideals were transplanted into modern soil. Both epochs are linked by the shared value of self-government defined in terms of citizen participation.[52] However, it is worth noting that participation was never an exclusively democratic principle. As Aristotle argued in Book III of his *Politics*, a citizen is one who participates in the business of the state: "A citizen pure and simple is defined by nothing so much as participation (*metechein*) in judicial functions and in office".[53] *Metechein* here carries the dual sense of "take part" and "have a share". Aristotle also employed the word *koinonein* to depict the activity of sharing in office.[54] The latter verb can signal the communal aspect of involvement, as with *communio* in Cicero's Latin: "Est [...] res publica res populi [...] utilitatis communione [shared advantage] sociatus".[55] *Metechein*, on the other hand, is usually closer to "partake", and carries the sense of engagement as well as apportionment.

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[52] James T. KLOPPENBERG, Toward Democracy: The Struggle for Self-Rule in European and American Thought (Oxford 2016).

[53] ARISTOTLE, Politics, trans. by H. RACKHAM (Cambridge, Mass. 1932), 1275a23-5.

[54] Ibid., 1275b19.

[55] CICERO, De re publica, ed. by James E. G. SETZEL (Cambridge 1995), 39: "Est [...] res publica res populi [...] coetus multitudinis iuris consensu et utilitatis communione sociatus" (a republic is a concern of the people [...] associated in agreement about justice and shared advantage). Cf. CICERO, De legibus, I, vii, 23: "inter quos porro est communio legis, inter eos communio iuris est" (those moreover who have law in common also have justice in common).

Aristotle proceeds in Book III to distinguish between the kinds of office one might hold. Offices can be definite in duration, as with a spell on the council (*boulē*) or as treasurer, or ongoing in nature, as with indefinite (*aoristos*) eligibility for jury service or a permanent role in the assembly.[56] Yet these forms of participation do not cover the full range of activities that might qualify one for citizenship. In Carthage, for instance, much like in Sparta, although the citizens took part in a general sense, they did not play any role in judicial decision-making.[57] Yet citizens in these cities did nonetheless take part, even if their involvement was not democratic in form. Participation was thus a common feature of city-states; it was not confined to democratic constitutions. However, it follows that democracies might usefully be identified in terms of the ways in which the citizens take part in the regime. There were approximately one thousand city-states in ancient Greece, many with conspicuously small populations. About three hundred of these are usually classified as democracies, although it was Athens, with somewhere in the region of 30,000 citizens, that attracted by far the greatest volume of commentary.[58] One of the distinguishing features of the passage from the Solonian Constitution to later democratic arrangements was the decline in the political significance of social stratification. As set out in the *Athenaion Politeia*, Solon allotted administrative roles in accordance with property qualifications.[59] After Cleisthenes, and particularly under Ephialtes and then Pericles, "the many (*tous pollous*) took more into their own hands in all fields of government".[60] With the death of Pericles, according to the same argument, the calibre of the leading men precipitously declined.[61] From this perspective, democratic participation could be characterised in terms of undifferentiated access to office and the demise of aristocratic monopoly over the leading magistracies. This, indeed, was how Adam Smith would present the ancient conception of democracy in the mid-eighteenth century: "They [the Greeks] gave the name of democracies to those governments where the people had the same access to the magistracies and offices of state as the nobles".[62]

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[56] ARISTOTLE, Politics, 1275a33.

[57] Ibid., 1275b10-22.

[58] Mogens Herman HANSEN, Thomas Heine NIELSEN (eds.), An Inventory of Archaic and Classical Poleis (Oxford 2004).

[59] ARISTOTLE, The Politics and the Constitution of the Athenians, ed. by Stephen EVERSON (Cambridge 1996) 215.

[60] Ibid., 230.

[61] Ibid., 231.

[62] Adam SMITH, Lectures on Jurisprudence [1763], ed. by R. L. MEEK, D. D. RAPHAEL, G. STEIN (Indianapolis, IN 1982) 226.

As Smith's observation implies, democracy sought to reduce the difference between ruling and being ruled. Nonetheless, successful popular government required some practical distinction between roles. From this perspective, democratic government was not based on indeterminate participation by all, but on specifying the ways in which the parts of the citizen body deliberated, decided, adjudicated and administered. A common criticism of Athens in the eighteenth century was that these roles were never effectively separated.   For instance, those who deliberated overlapped with those who decided. Similarly, legislative and judicial power were equally prerogatives of the *dēmos.* Gabriel de Mably made the point by complaining that Solon had never adequately distinguished the deliberative function of the *boulē* (council) from the legislative activities of the *ekklēsia* (assembly): "he had appointed a senate [*boulē*] to prepare such matters as were proper to lay before the assembly [*ekklēsia*] of the people. He destroyed his own purpose by giving permission to every citizen of the age of fifty to harangue them. Eloquence will ever form a party superior to that of magistracy".[63] So, while rights of participation ought to be distributed with due discrimination, it was difficult under democracies to institutionalise distinctions.

Hume drew the same conclusion in comparing ancient with modern politics: among the ancients "there was no medium between a severe, jealous Aristocracy, ruling over discontented subjects; and a turbulent, factious, tyrannical Democracy".[64] Despite the divisions in Athens and Rome between classes of citizens, the poorer orders were inclined to encroach on the rights of the wealthier ones: "SOLON'S laws excluded no freeman from votes or elections, but confined some magistracies to a particular census; yet were the people never satisfied till those laws were repealed".[65]

Rousseau made a related point in his *Contrat social.* He claimed that under the Athenian democracy legislation was conflated with magistracy: "When the people of Athens, for example, appointed or dismissed its leaders, awarded honours to one or imposed penalties on another, and by means of a multitude of particular decrees [*décrets particuliers*] performed indistinguishably all the acts of Government, the people then no longer had a general will properly speaking".[66] This amounted to an interpretation of Aristotle's "fifth form of democracy" set out in Book IV of the

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[63] Gabriel Bonnot DE MABLY, Observations sur les Grecs (Geneva 1749) 77-78.
[64] David HUME, Of the Populousness of Ancient Nations (1754). In: IDEM, Essays, 415-416.
[65] Ibid.
[66] Jean-Jacques ROUSSEAU, On the Social Contract. In: The Collected Writings of Rousseau, vol. 4, ed. by Roger D. MASTERS and Christopher KELLY (Hanover 1994) 149; Jean-Jacques ROUSSEAU, Du contrat social [1762], ed. by Robert DERATHÉ. In: IDEM, Du contrat social. Écrits politiques (Œuvres complètes, ed. by Bernard GAGNEBIN, Marce RAYMOND, vol. 3, Paris 1964) 347-470, 374.

Politics in which "the multitude" (*to plēthos*) were presented as governing by legislative decrees (*psephismata*).[67] Under such an arrangement, Rousseau argued, legislation was confused with execution: while the former was concerned with general norms, the latter covered particular cases like appointing leaders and awarding honours. Where the people directly performed "all acts of Government" in this way, the sovereign citizen body became indistinguishable from the class of rulers. Under the appropriate circumstances, an assembly of the citizen body could be charged with formulating general laws that applied equally to all, but not with making particular decisions on the basis of individual preferences. To administer the affairs of public life, the people needed a committee of worthy rulers.

It was for this reason that Rousseau concluded that "a genuine Democracy has never existed and will never exist".[68] Under a regime defined by indiscriminate participation, the state would collapse into a government of all against all. For this reason, Kant would later equate democracy with the extremes of violence and despotism. Under a democratic constitution, he wrote, "everyone wants to be master [*Herr*]", which is a recipe for the systematic collision of individual wills.[69] As in Rousseau, a separation of political functions was essential to serving the common good. Such a separation was best served by distinguishing the body of rulers from the generality of the sovereign people. Under a system of pure popular government, Rousseau noted, "all the Citizens are born magistrates", whereas a chosen aristocracy limits the number of rulers, who "become magistrates only through election, a means by which probity, enlightenment, experience, and all the other reasons for public preference and esteem become so many new guarantees of being wisely governed".[70]

Montesquieu likewise encapsulated a widespread sense of alarm: broad-based involvement in public life presupposed levels of social cohesion that were in practice incredibly difficult to maintain. Integration, he argued, required sustained self-sacrifice – "a renunciation of oneself, which is always painful".[71] Self-discipline of the kind was always precarious, and with its failure citizen participation descended into internecine struggle.

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[67] ARISTOTLE, Politics, 1292a5-6.

[68] ROUSSEAU, On the Social Contract, 173; Du contrat social, 404.

[69] Immanuel KANT, Zum ewigen Frieden (1795). In: IDEM, Schriften zur Anthropologie, Geschichtsphilosophie, Politik und Pädagogik, vol. 1, ed. by Wilhelm WEISCHEDEL (Werkausgabe 11, Frankfurt am Main 1977) 207.

[70] ROUSSEAU, On the Social Contract, 175; Du contrat social, 407.

[71] Charles-Louis de Secondat, Baron de MONTESQUIEU, De l'esprit des lois (1748) (Œuvres complètes, vol. 2, ed. by Roger CAILLOIS, Paris 1951) pt. I, bk. IV, ch. 5.

In *The Spirit of the Laws*, Montesquieu famously distinguished between modern liberty and the public freedom enjoyed among the ancients. The "power of the people", he wrote, is standardly confused with the "liberty of the people".[72] Given the situation of mutual hostility between social orders, popular power is liable to slide into immoderate excess, leading in turn to the denial of personal freedom and security. An observable feature of the ancient republics was the wisdom of the people in selecting leaders by comparison with their ineptitude in holding the reins of power.[73] The principles determining selection for office differed among the Athenians and the Romans. The nature of power in any republic was dependent upon the combination of three principles: first, on the composition of the legislature; second, on eligibility for magistracy; and third, on the nature of voting arrangements. The constitution of Servius Tullius had been aristocratic in character, since voting in centuries privileged the "leading" citizens.[74] Solon, on the other hand, was guided by the "spirit of democracy" in dividing the population into four classes: every order participated in shaping the administration – all four in the election of judges, the first three in the selection of magistrates.[75] Yet this division of labour proved divisive in the medium term as the democracy succumbed to its intrinsic weakness.

This weakness had two possible sources. First of all, democracy might be corrupted by the decline of public virtue brought about as a result of the loss of relative equality. Yet secondly, democracy could be compromised by the "spirit of extreme equality". Under these circumstances, any discrimination between citizens, including distinctions based on merit, was frowned upon by the *dēmos*: "the people, finding intolerable even the power they entrust to the others, want to be everything themselves: to deliberate for the senate, to execute for the magistrates, and to cast aside all the judges".[76] It was precisely this egalitarian spirit that rose to dominance at Athens after their victory over the Persians: "victory at Salamis […] corrupted the republic of Athens". Resentful of particular magistrates, the Athenians soon resented magistracy altogether – "enemies of those who govern, they soon become enemies of the constitution".[77] Democracy had brought with it such instability and strife that scarcely anyone between the renaissance and the eighteenth century could conceive of reasonable legislators wanting to try it again. As Hume wrote: "At present, there is

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[72] Ibid., pt. II, bk. XI, ch. 2.
[73] Ibid., pt. I, bk. II, ch. 2.
[74] Ibid.
[75] Ibid.
[76] Ibid., pt. I, bk. 8, ch.2.
[77] Ibid., pt. I, bk. 8, ch. 4.

not one republic in EUROPE, from one extremity of it to the other, that is not remarkable for justice, lenity, and stability, equal to, or even beyond MARSEILLES, RHODES, or the most celebrated of antiquity. Almost all of them are well-tempered Aristocracies."[78]

IV.   Conclusion

Down to the late 1960s, participation was commonly regarded as a potential problem in politics. In the 1950s and early 1960s, apathy was identified as a feature of modern citizenship – sometimes seen as an advantage by comparison with mass ideological mobilisation, sometimes as a deficiency of liberal democracy whose imperfections were nonetheless preferable to rival regime forms. Yet soon this staple proposition of post-War political science was regarded by critics as covertly ideological in nature, based on a rejection of a "classical" vision of democracy as requiring active citizen participation.[79] Quentin Skinner drew the same conclusion: recent empirically-grounded political science had, by and large, "devalued the idea of popular political participation".[80] This devaluation was usually seen as an unwelcome innovation – as a betrayal of an older, canonical vision extending from Aristotle to Rousseau. However, the truth is that this reputedly classical perspective was rarely advanced without qualification. First of all, participation was a recognised feature of ancient politics, but it was never identified solely with democratic government. Every republican regime was premised on some form of citizen participation. But secondly, in commentaries extending from Aristotle to Rousseau unbridled participation was seen as posing fundamental problems for political organisation and decision-making.

As has often been observed, when modern democracy was invented in the nineteenth century it did not take the form of general participation in government by the direct involvement of the people in assemblies, law courts and administration. By way of contrast with ancient arrangements, government had grown remote and specialised, while nonetheless refusing to embrace a designated class of natural leaders. Participation was now largely confined to the process of electoral choice, and debate began to concentrate on the quality of deliberation among relatively apathetic voters. For political scientists up until the middle of the 1960s, government

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78 David HUME, Of the Populousness of Ancient Nations (1754). In: IDEM, Essays, 415-16.
79 Graeme DUNCAN and Steven LUKES, The New Democracy. In: Political Studies 11 (1963) 156-177, 163.
80 Quentin SKINNER, The Empirical Theorists of Democracy and Their Critics: A Plague on Both Their Houses. In: Political Theory 1 (1973) 287-306.

supported by the people as registered by a competitive struggle for their votes, for all that it risked entrenching disaffection and perpetuating voter ignorance, seemed preferable to forms of active participation associated with mass mobilisation. Meanwhile, the ideal of participation was rekindled by political theory and then championed by historians of political thought. Beginning with Hannah Arendt and select members of the Frankfurt School, and then variously endorsed by figures like Wolin, Pocock and Skinner, the image of the civically-minded citizen was rehabilitated. What is most striking about this process is the decline in scepticism, that had lasted from the Athenians to the Enlightenment, about the wisdom of direct and indeterminate participation as an instrument of good government.