

Deliberation, Legitimacy, and Multilateral Democracy

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Is deliberation essential to legitimate democratic governance? Deliberation may have epistemic value, improving the quality of information and arguments. Deliberation may be transformative, shaping beliefs and opinions. Or deliberation may be part of a conception of justice that constrains authority, by requiring that procedures be justified in terms of reasons acceptable to those burdened by authoritative decisions. Although appealing, the epistemic and transformative arguments are limited by the scale and complexity of many problems for which democratic solutions are sought. But the reason-giving argument is persuasive whenever collective decisions allow burdens to be imposed on others.

INTRODUCTION

“Enhanced deliberation” has been a prominent theme in recent democratic theory. But why value deliberation as essential to democracy? Certainly there is some intuitive plausibility to the idea that important decisions, whether personal or collective, ought to emerge from careful and informed judgment rather than, say, capricious choice or unreflective deference to prevailing opinion. Similarly plausible is the idea that the quality of judgments on public matters might be improved by open exchanges among informed parties. But beyond such intuitions, controversy ensues over the status of deliberation in democratic governance. Why is deliberation essential to democratic legitimacy? Is deliberation essential to any association that aims to be democratic? If so, is deliberation essential for the same reasons across different levels of political and economic organization? These questions are of vital importance if we seek to apply democratic principles to multilateral organizations such as the World Bank, the European Union (EU), and the United Nations (UN).

Should we apply democratic principles to multilateral organizations? I argue that such an application is required if an organization either directly or indirectly authorizes the use of force to distribute costs and benefits. But the plausibility of this thesis is not at all obvious, given that, at the scale of multilateral organizations, the stock categories of democratic theory are ambiguous and contentious. Does the World Bank

“govern” a “public,” and in what respects does the bank “authorize coercion”? Are sovereign member states of the UN “citizens” in any meaningful sense? Does the UN general assembly answer to an “electorate”? Should the EU have “sovereignty”?

To be sure, these categories are increasingly contentious *within* existing states, as theorists debate the meaning of “citizenship” and wrestle with the implications of diversity, enduring inequalities, and past injustice for the fairness and stability of democratic forms of government. But matters are even more contentious when we move from the question of legitimacy within established democratic states to the problem of making multilateral organizations more democratic. This move forces us to think about deliberation and legitimacy beyond familiar categories of citizenship and state sovereignty.

In this essay, I explore the relationship between deliberation and democratic legitimacy both within and beyond these familiar categories. I evaluate three strategies for justifying deliberation as a democratic fundamental. First, deliberation may have epistemic value, improving the quality of information available to participants in the democratic process and improving the quality of judgments about matters of shared concern. Second, deliberation may be transformative, shaping beliefs and opinions toward consensus. Third, deliberation may follow from a conception of justice that constrains political authority by requiring that procedures be justified in terms of reasons acceptable to those burdened by exercises of power authorized through these procedures.

The epistemic and transformative arguments, although appealing, are limited in applicability by the scale and complexity of the problems for which democratic solutions are often sought, both within existing sovereign states and at broader spheres of organization. But the reason-giving argument is persuasive for any collective decisions that can be shown to result in the use of coercive force to impose significant costs on others. The difficulty of determining what costs are significant for whom, and what reasons would support them, makes enhanced deliberation especially attractive, whether we are concerned with the legitimacy of local governments, federal arrangements, or multilateral organizations.

DELIBERATIVE DEMOCRACY WITHIN THE SOVEREIGN STATE

I begin with definitions of what democratic theorists typically mean by “democracy,” “legitimacy,” and “deliberation.” I then elaborate “deliberative democracy” as both an ideal of democratic legitimacy and a collection of related institutional proposals for governing citizens within a territorially bounded sovereign state. Having settled these definitions, I briefly outline a case for skepticism about deliberative democracy at any level of political organization. I then evaluate three arguments in favor of deliberation as a democratic fundamental, both within sovereign states and at broader organizational scales.

Theory

Democracy is an ideal of self-government, of a group of actors ruling themselves as members of a political community. Expressions of this ideal describe systems for taking authoritative action, on behalf of members, about matters of shared concern. Three features characterize these expressions: membership rules, political equality, and binding collective decisions. Membership rules delimit the group of participants who are to govern themselves. Membership might be defined by individuals contracting to form an exclusive association for mutual economic gain, by persons within a given territory who share a common language, history, and rituals and who define themselves as a distinct national or ethnic community, or by representatives of independent political states agreeing to give up some sovereign authority to form a mutually beneficial federation. Political equality has two democratic components. First, members of a democratic association are presumed to be roughly equal with respect to certain minimum capabilities for reasoning and making moral distinctions relevant to public affairs. Second, the interests of each member are generally to be given equal consideration in authoritative judgments. Binding collective decisions are authoritative whether they are made by members themselves, elected representatives, or appointed experts.

Various accounts of democracy differ in their interpretations of “membership,” “political equality,” and “binding collective decisions.” Who are “the people”? What is meant by “equal consideration”? What sort of participation, and by whom, results in legitimate collective decisions?

“Legitimacy” describes the acceptability of claims to authority. An account of legitimacy involves assumptions, principles, and arguments in terms of which authority is justified. Democracy is an ideal of popular sovereignty, according to which legitimacy is ultimately assessed in terms of the judgments of those governed. This account threatens any presumption that standards of legitimacy are simply given by tradition, divine edict, or rational reflection. Even if tradition, revelation, or reason do provide standards of legitimacy that are arguably correct according to some widely accepted standard, democratic legitimacy nonetheless demands that they be affirmed by members of the association in question, not merely imposed upon them.

Deliberation is a process of careful and informed reflection on facts and opinions, generally leading to a judgment on the matter at hand. Although several democratic theorists emphasize the importance of public deliberation to democracy, the distinction between public and private deliberation is somewhat ambiguous: even in distinctly public encounters, many of our interactions with others involve a sort of internal dialogue, as we interpret utterances in light of our own understandings and expectations and frame the comments and actions of others in light of our own assumptions, values, and interests (Goodin, 94–95). But

deliberation is arguably public to the extent that personal reflection on public matters is combined with an open exchange of facts and arguments with others in a variety of settings. Publicity demands, at the very least, that deliberation take place in full view of those who are ultimately affected by authoritative judgments.

The work of John Rawls (1971, 1993) and Jurgen Habermas ([1962] 1989, [1992] 1996), with their respective emphases on public reason and discourse in the public sphere of democratic states, serve as foundations to the emphasis on deliberation in recent democratic theory. Bernard Manin and Joshua Cohen (1989) have also been influential. Of considerable importance to arguments about legitimacy in both moral and political theory has been the idea of reason-giving, which appears in various forms in the work of, among others, Habermas ([1992] 1996, 1979, 1998), Bruce Ackerman, T. M. Scanlon, Charles Larmore, Manin, Cohen (1989, 1996), John Dryzek (1990, 2000), Amy Gutmann and Dennis Thompson (1990, 1996), Selya Benhabib (1992, 1996), and Rawls (1993, 1997).

According to a reason-giving account of democratic legitimacy, public deliberation is vital because the authoritative decisions imposed by governments demand justification to those burdened by authority, and justification must appeal to evidence and argument acceptable to reasonable citizens. According to Rawls (1993, 48–62), citizens are reasonable to the extent that they desire to pursue their distinctive aims in ways that can be justified to other free and equal citizens. Gutmann and Thompson (1996, ch. 2) adopt a similar standard. Something like the condition of reasonableness is vital to recent accounts of deliberative democracy: justification in terms of mutually acceptable reasons will be of no legitimating value if those being addressed deny at the outset the value of finding such reasons.

There are, of course, a range of structural impediments to the inclusiveness and responsiveness of public deliberative practices in existing democratic states, as Iris Young, Melissa Williams (2000), Dryzek (2000), and Monique Deveaux have noted. These theorists emphasize the importance of recognizing and respecting diverse cultural values and expressive practices in public deliberations and authoritative judgments. Jane Mansbridge further suggests that spaces of dissent and resistance must be protected for groups of citizens whose distinctive interests and aspirations have been confounded by democratic decisions, or whose lifestyles and expressive norms have not yet been sufficiently incorporated into public deliberative practices.

Institutions

Given a deliberative account of legitimacy, and building upon the associative framework provided by Cohen and Joel Rogers, Cohen and Charles Sabel (1997) and Archon Fung and Erik Wright argue for net-

works of local deliberative arenas, distributed and connected in ways conducive to effective social problem-solving, exchanges of information and novel proposals, monitored by a coordinating central authority that collects, standardizes, and disseminates information to participants. With this information in hand, citizens deliberate together on matters of local and regional concern, setting priorities for government spending, public service provision, and the appropriate scope of regulation. They also appoint representatives to a variety of councils, which, in turn, are trusted to appoint and monitor experts to resolve technical matters. These discretionary activities are themselves kept as open as possible to scrutiny by interested citizens.

Several scholars have explored specific forms of deliberation within modern democratic states. James Fishkin (1991, 1995) suggests the democratic value of “deliberative polls”: statistical samples of citizens who, after deliberating for several days on an issue and having access to a range of information and expert opinions, often arrive at collective judgments that are rather different from the predeliberative opinions of participants. The motivating idea is that deliberations of small samples of citizens may, under certain conditions, be taken as representative, not of what citizens actually think, but of what they would likely think if everyone had the chance to research and reflect carefully on the issues at hand (disagreement may, of course, persist in these deliberative assemblies, but it is at least reasoned disagreement among informed citizens). Fishkin envisions nationwide systems of such assemblies, to which citizens would be appointed in much the same way as for jury assignments in several existing democracies. We could imagine a political system in which conventional legislative bodies and executive agencies are required to explain, in public, how their own judgments and actions are in accord with judgments that have emerged from relevant citizen assemblies, and, if they are not, to account for the contrast.

Fishkin’s proposals fit well with those offered by Cohen and Sabel and Fung and Wright, whose schemes have a potential limitation: by focusing on predominantly local or regional issues, deliberative politics may be reduced to little more than well-regulated and reasonably well-informed conflicts among particular interests. There may be useful transfers of knowledge across these proposed networks of local deliberative fora, but this knowledge will still relate largely to local or regional problems of public service provision. Broader and more fundamental issues may not receive adequate deliberative attention under such a system. This problem could be resolved by combining networks, of local deliberative associations with periodic deliberative assemblies, the members of which are drawn from a wide range of locales and walks of life.

In addition to being concerned, for the most part, with the internal politics of sovereign democratic states, much of the extant work on deliberative democracy further emphasizes *external* features of deliberation—that is, publicity of information and open exchanges among deliberators.

In contrast, Robert Goodin emphasizes the internal, reflective processes bound up in democratic deliberation, suggesting that increased attention to internal features of deliberation serves as a vital supplement to various attempts to make public deliberation feasible in modern democracies. Even if democratic deliberation is limited in practice to small groups of representatives (as in Fishkin's deliberative polls), a great many citizens might nonetheless be made "imaginatively present": engagement with literature, visual art, and journalism may encourage us to reflect on beliefs or assumptions that we hold without much reflection, bringing us to imagine ourselves in very different circumstances. Given such exposure, if and when we do come to serve as representatives in official deliberations, we bring to these activities a range of imaginative experiences that enrich our reflections, conversations, and eventual judgments. Thus there is a good argument for government provision and maintenance of spaces in which diverse expressive and journalistic activities can freely take place, and perhaps also government funding aimed at fostering such diversity. Such forms of support would be justified as a means of securing the conditions for effective democratic representation.

Following Goodin and recent work by Dryzek (2000), we might fruitfully understand public deliberation not only in terms of the representation of discrete interests and opinions, but also in terms of the degree to which various *discourses*—clusters of assumptions, opinions, expressive and argumentative styles, interpretations of the world, and corresponding ways of thinking about particular issues—are able to find voice and receive consideration in the deliberations that eventually inform authoritative decisions. On this view, democratic legitimacy requires fair and ongoing contests among discourses.

Goodin's and Dryzek's proposals apply most obviously to the cacophonous and variegated public spheres of modern democratic states, but they are not limited to this spatial and organizational scale. Indeed, Dryzek clearly means his account of deliberation to have relevance for democracy beyond the nation-state. Imaginative activities, and the contest of discourses on such issues as cultural diversity, human rights, labor standards, free trade, and environmental regulation, may cut across existing political boundaries and ideological categories, as journalists, researchers, and activists coordinate information and activities in diverse and increasingly sophisticated ways around the globe.

Skeptical Concerns

There are, however, several skeptical contributions to the literature on deliberative democracy, suggesting at least three reasons to be concerned about efforts to enhance deliberation under conditions of pluralism: deficits of trust; the possibility of deep antagonisms; and perverse group dynamics.

Deficits of Trust

Historical injustices, enduring inequalities, and resulting deficits of trust may undermine proposals such as Fishkin's, Goodin's, and Dryzek's, thus requiring more stringent standards of accountability, such as the formal group representation of some groups in conventional legislatures suggested by Williams (1998). This caveat applies not only to the internal politics of diverse societies such as Canada and the United States, but also to hopes for fruitful North-South dialogue and cooperation on global economic and security issues. In the latter case as surely as the former, past injustices and enduring inequalities (for instance, the legacy of slavery in the U.S. and of colonialism on the African continent) undermine trust across racial, ethnic, and class distinctions. Just as black Americans may be skeptical that their distinctive interests will be adequately considered by white representatives in the U.S. Congress, so, too, may destitute citizens of many African states be skeptical that their needs will receive sufficient attention from affluent European and North American economists at the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Is such distrust generally warranted? No doubt most development economists at the World Bank are sincerely troubled by persistent poverty and corruption in the countries they try to assist, just as many elected representatives in the U.S. are surely troubled by the persistence of racism and racial inequalities in their society. But sincerity alone is rarely sufficient to correct deficits of trust. Sincerity must be paired with clear and enduring evidence of representatives actually improving the conditions of those they claim to represent.¹ In many cases, a range of structural factors—perhaps unrelated to the sincere efforts of representatives—undercut any such favorable perceptions.

For example, regardless of the sincere motives of those who design and oversee a World Bank project, ignorance and incorrect assumptions easily undermine these motives, and paternalistic attitudes may prevent officials from criticizing their own assumptions and models. Even if adequate models are correctly applied, local corruption in the target country can interfere with the success of the project or at least divert benefits toward a select few individuals and domestic organizations and impose a range of costs (environmental damage, forced relocation) upon impoverished residents. But the very lack of mechanisms to ensure accountability under corrupt and unresponsive governments makes it difficult for residents to distinguish the failings of their own government from the perceived failings of international organizations such as the World Bank. In such settings, the sincerity of World Bank officials would be largely irrelevant to the trust of local residents that their interests are being adequately addressed by that organization.

Deliberative Antagonism

We should worry about the potential for deliberative antagonism in plural settings. James Johnson doubts that inclusive public deliberation will be distinguishable, in practice, from irreconcilable moral conflict. We might reasonably worry that, under conditions of pluralism, inclusive public deliberation about even mundane everyday issues could easily initiate acrimonious public debate, as deliberating parties seek to find deep moral and philosophical disputes lurking behind the most minor disagreements.

For theorists such as Gutmann and Thompson (1996), this is not necessarily a problem: parties to such disputes may nonetheless be motivated to search for provisional solutions that emerge from and are in keeping with a commitment to mutual respect and a desire to minimize the degree to which arguments depend on controversial moral claims. But are these reasonable expectations? If moral and philosophical disagreements reflect deep differences in basic assumptions and orienting values, then why trust deliberating parties to minimize controversial assumptions in presenting their arguments? Such maneuvers may sometimes be prudent when arguing from irreconcilable moral foundations, but why would we expect these citizens to respect those with whom they disagree in such profound ways? What is to prevent deliberation from degenerating into divisive and deeply antagonistic challenges to the beliefs of others?

The scale of political organization does not matter here: so long as there is a plurality of beliefs and interests, the possibility of spiraling antagonism seems to hold as surely between ethnic or religious political parties in a federal state as it does for debates among member states of the UN.

Pathologies of Deliberation

Several scholars have noted that prevailing forms of public deliberation in modern democracies (juries, town meetings, various assemblies and committees, the mass media, computer-mediated discussions) can and often do exclude or misrepresent minority values and interests or undervalue certain expressive and argumentative styles. For instance, Lynn Sanders (362–369) points to gender and class biases in jury settings, and Benjamin Page identifies distortions in the contemporary news media. Susan Stokes notes that deliberative institutions may be sensitive to strategic manipulation and erroneous beliefs. Furthermore, deliberation in these settings may be a source of ideological domination (Przeworski) and polarization of opinion (Sunstein 2000). This is especially so for self-selecting groups based on shared beliefs or opinions, but the result may hold for any assembly or committee, especially if membership is relatively stable or if new members are similar in training and outlook. Under such conditions, a distinct institutional culture may emerge, and interests can become vested in the institutional and cultural status quo.

Cass Sunstein (2000) notes that, in many actual deliberative settings, the actions or attitudes of certain prominent persons influence others, by giving informational cues on how one should act or think in particular situations. Participants may perceive their social standing to be contingent on agreement with others on certain matters, and so they may be tempted to modify their public statements to conform with those made by relevant others. And even when diverse sources of information are available outside of deliberative groups, the pool of information and arguments drawn on by participants often becomes distorted in favor of a particular point of view, resulting in a degree of ideological conformity that is sometimes enforced by aggressive attacks on those who attempt to enter the group with other facts and contrary arguments. These reputational and informational effects can lead participants to show extraordinary deference to the opinions of one or a few authoritative speakers. Furthermore, deliberation under reputational pressures and informational distortions seems to lead participants and the groups they deliberate within to settle on more extreme positions than were held prior to deliberation, suggesting that the differences between various groups in such a society may become more pronounced if public deliberation is mediated through a range of associations.

Sunstein further notes that these are arguably deliberative variations of the cascade phenomenon: when information is scarce and many actors are not sufficiently confident in the information they do have, they may use the actions of first movers as signals (Banerjee; Bikhchandani, Hirshleifer, and Welch; Scharfstein and Stein). But even if there is sufficient reliable information available, cascades can still occur if actors assess social standing in terms of public agreement with particular opinions. Threats of violent sanctions by extremists can reinforce such reputational cascades (Axelrod). Reputational cascade processes are not always objectionable, but they may have been an important factor in several recent ethnic conflicts (Kuran). Consider the events leading to the Hutu-led genocide of Tutsi Rwandans during the 1990s: a great many officials and citizens voiced public agreement with increasingly extremist statements of Hutu ethnic superiority, including many claims about Tutsi Rwandans that were obviously false and contrived (Gourevitch).

To be sure, intragroup uniformity and intergroup polarization may not be critical problems for established liberal democracies in which basic rights are secure and extremists cannot easily carry through on threats or exert undue influence over public information. But these processes do suggest skepticism about enhanced deliberation: if we can infer the likely outcomes of group deliberations simply by knowing the initial inclinations of members, then why would we need deliberation in the first place?

WHY DELIBERATION?

Why, then, would we think of deliberation as essential to the legitimacy of democratic procedures and outcomes, especially in plural settings and

at broader organizational scales, such as multilateral organizations? If deliberation can be so problematic within existing democratic states, then why would we export these problems to broader organizational scales, such as the EU or the UN?

In spite of appealing intuitions and recent scholarly attention, deliberation is clearly not vital to every plausible account of democracy. For instance, if a decision procedure involved aggregating equally weighted votes over a set of possible outcomes, it might well be considered a democratic procedure, regardless of whether or not the voting parties arrived at their preferences or justified their votes in a deliberative manner. Participants might vote directly for propositions in a referendum, or they might elect representatives, who would then vote in legislative assemblies as instructed by their constituents. On this view, the democratic character of the decision procedure is settled in both cases by the equal weighting of preferences in arriving at a binding collective decision and has nothing to do with informed reflection by—or public argument among—free and equal parties. Whether we are considering citizens of a sovereign state or representatives of member states in an international organization, what is important is: (1) that authority can ultimately be linked to participants themselves; (2) that the procedures for doing so are fair; and (3) that these procedures tend to result in more participants being satisfied than dissatisfied with outcomes.

Or we might understand democracy as a system of bargaining among various interests. On this view, collective decision-making is a complex process of conflict, negotiation, and compromise. Within a sovereign state, this process involves elected officials, government agencies, firms, unions, nongovernmental actors such as neighborhood councils, community leaders, and issue-specific advocacy groups, and occasionally citizens themselves. Beyond the sovereign state, the relevant parties to bargaining would be representatives of sovereign governments, influential actors within some states (large firms, for instance, or mayors of major cities), a range of actors spanning existing political jurisdictions such as multinational corporations, and networks of activists united by a range of issues such as human rights, labor standards, and environmental change. A broadly applicable normative pluralism follows easily from this analytic stance: democratic procedures are fair when bargaining processes are fair, and these should converge on widely acceptable policies, resulting in outcomes that more or less faithfully reflect the values and interests of participants, in a manner analogous to the way in which we hope that unfettered exchanges in a fair market will eventually lead to Pareto-efficient distributions of resources. Legitimacy does not require that these interests be arrived at in a deliberative manner, or that bargaining processes be deliberative in character.

These proceduralist and pluralist accounts of democracy assess legitimacy in terms of fairness. Certainly there are limits to the persuasiveness of such accounts, but they have the obvious virtue of applying in a

straightforward way to multilateral organizations, and they do not seem obviously implausible simply because they deny priority to deliberation. Why, then, should we suppose that deliberation matters to legitimacy?

Deliberation as an Epistemic Practice?

A weakness of nondeliberative procedural accounts of legitimacy is the possibility that, by merely aggregating the stated preferences of voting parties, fair democratic procedures may lead to collective decisions that are incorrect, or even abhorrent, according to any reasonable standard. Consider that, in modern societies, public issues tend to be rather complex, and, as Anthony Downs has famously argued, it is often relatively costly for citizens to gain the information necessary to make informed decisions on a range of public issues. Under such conditions, the preferences and opinions of many citizens may be unreflective and uninformed or, worse yet, the product of manipulation by those with the skill and incentive to sway public opinion for their own narrow interests.² In the absence of deliberation, fair procedures might result in the tyranny of passionate majorities, themselves swayed by clever minorities. Deliberation is desirable, then, insofar as we generally favor informed and careful judgments over ill-informed and unreflective choices.

Thus, an argument in favor of a deliberative account of democratic legitimacy appeals to the potential epistemic value of inclusive public deliberation. Following Rousseau, we might think that deliberation can illuminate the common good. Or we may be less ambitious and merely hope that deliberative strategies of information aggregation can generate correct answers to certain sorts of shared problems: when preferences are unanimous, but competence and information are not uniformly distributed, majority decisions may identify correct answers with great certainty. Under such conditions, deliberation might improve the quality of information available to voting parties, and thus increase the likelihood of finding the correct answer.

The relevant finding is generally attributed to Condorcet, but the underlying intuition is ancient (for instance, see Aristotle, 1281a40–1282a25, 1286a30–35). To illustrate: suppose that n voters are addressing a shared problem that admits of a better and worse solution. Each voter has some level of competence, p , which is the probability of choosing the better solution. Assume that all voters prefer the better solution; they are not uniformly competent, however, and the amount and quality of information vary across voters. Further assume that voter errors are not correlated. This is often interpreted as a condition of independence: voters may discuss facts and arguments together, and they may even be routinely persuaded by opinion leaders; but they do not show unquestioning or merely strategic deference to such leaders (Estlund 1994), and there are several distinct opinion groups (Ladha). Given these conditions, if the

average voter competence is $\bar{p} > \frac{1}{2}$, then it follows from the law of large numbers that a simple majority decision rule should identify the correct answer, the majority competence being $P > \bar{p}$ with P approaching 1 as n increases, even if average voter competence is only slightly greater than $\frac{1}{2}$.³

Thus, we might understand deliberation and voting as primarily *epistemic* mechanisms (Coleman and Ferejohn; Cohen 1986) that together provide an estimate of likelihood concerning the common good (Young, 1235–1236). Public deliberation is important, then, insofar as it tends to enhance the quality of private deliberation and voting: if public deliberation can be regulated so as to include a wide variety of opinions, facts, and arguments, then such deliberation may enhance the quality of individual judgments.⁴

There are good reasons for skepticism about the relevance of the jury theorem to electoral politics in modern representative democracies, and certainly to majoritarian decision procedures at broader levels of organization, such as the UN and the EU. There are concerns about the amount and quality of information that can realistically be made available to participants, especially on complex technical matters. Furthermore, systematic biases in information may undermine the epistemic quality of voting.⁵ This is not to deny the epistemic potential of deliberation and voting, but rather to suggest that some significant conditions are necessary to achieve epistemic gains from these public activities. To reap such gains, we would have to ensure that public deliberation and collective choice are applied to problems for which it is meaningful to talk about a correct answer, such as goods for which preference is unanimous, or very nearly so.

This is not as stringent a condition as it might at first seem: even for large groups whose members have diverse values and preferences, it is likely that some common good exists. For instance, whatever the composition of interests, identities, and associations in a given society, there will be shared interests in such constitutional essentials as personal rights, collective security, and responsible governance. A similar case can be made—within the sovereign state and at broader geographic scales—for such public goods as communications and transportation infrastructure, and for widely accepted standards in communications technologies, financial exchanges, and the assessment of environmental impact.⁶ In such cases, the common good requires identification and provision of specific public goods, and it is entirely plausible that the best means for providing these goods will often be uncertain: the amount and quality of information available to parties may vary considerably; and some individuals or agencies may, for whatever reasons, simply be better than others at reasoning about the provision of public goods, and how these goods contribute to a more abstract common good.

Reaping epistemic gains in such cases does not require extensive participation by all or even most participants at every stage of legislation and administration. Nor does it require widespread expertise in such technical matters as economic policy analysis or environmental risk assessment. Rather, inclusive public deliberation and voting can be limited to two sorts of decisions: first, judgments about what policies are in the common interest and how they are best achieved; and second, judgments about whether, given this public mandate, the relevant representatives and experts are performing satisfactorily as they formulate and implement specific policies. To perform these epistemic duties, we need only require that participants be able to evaluate the persuasiveness of arguments, based on a shared body of facts and uncontroversial rules of deduction and inference. It does not seem unreasonable to think that many persons will be able to apply these basic skills to a range of facts and arguments, so as to evaluate the suitability of candidates and proposals and the performance of elected representatives and appointed experts. In such cases, then, a pooling of information, and widespread scrutiny of that information and associated arguments, may lead to more effective decisions and more effective monitoring of representatives and experts as they go about providing the public goods settled upon through deliberation and voting.

But how can we ensure that public information is sufficiently reliable, and that diverse ideas and arguments are considered? This question is particularly vexing when we consider the force of the epistemic argument at the level of multilateral organizations. At the level of the sovereign state, public funding and various regulations might succeed in forging a public culture in which a wide range of facts, beliefs, perspectives, and arguments are made available to citizens. We may believe, with John Stuart Mill, that a vibrant public culture of diverse ideas and “experiments in living” will prevent systematic distortions of information and discourage one or a few dominant habits and opinions from becoming accepted without critical reflection. Mill hoped that extensive personal freedoms of thought, expression, and association would sustain such a public culture.

When we shift our attention beyond the democratic state, however, we immediately notice that many sovereign states—indeed, many member states of multilateral organizations such as the UN, and clients of the World Bank and the IMF—are not internally democratic and certainly do not come close to approximating Mill’s vision of a diverse and vibrant public sphere. We might hope that, at the global scale, networks of committed activists, journalists, and academics, such as those examined by Margaret Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, will eventually bring about a degree of diversity and openness across existing political boundaries, working across borders to challenge unresponsive governments, trying to make them more accountable to a range of suppressed values and interests by ensuring that these voices find some sort of public hearing.

But even if we could achieve a vibrant public sphere both within and among sovereign states, the epistemic approach has a more profound limitation. Consider the problem of deciding how to provide a much-needed and widely desired public good. There will often be alternative strategies for providing particular public goods, each Pareto-improving, but each characterized by different spatial and temporal distributions of secondary costs and benefits. In such cases, winners may be able to compensate losers, and public deliberation might help to ensure that related negotiations are fair and informed—an epistemic virtue, certainly. But such negotiations are fundamentally about conflicting preferences—that is, we would rather pursue the common good in a way that imposes the fewest costs and the most benefits on ourselves and those about whom we care. And these costs will often be complex and contested, making deliberative resolution difficult, if not impossible. At the scale of multilateral institutions such as the UN, cultural and ideological differences, paired with dramatic economic inequalities among member states, may well make this issue more pronounced, especially insofar as some outcomes, although arguably Pareto-improving, may nonetheless involve the imposition of considerable long-term social and environmental costs on disadvantaged parties.⁷

Deliberation as a Transformative Practice?

Suppose that, given the preceding concerns, we reject the epistemic approach. We will ignore the deliberative status of preferences and collective judgments, and instead apply fair procedures to maximize the number of voters (whether citizens of a state, or representatives of member states in a multilateral organization) whose preferences are satisfied by a collective decision.

Majoritarian procedures are obvious candidates: if participants are dissatisfied with an outcome, they cannot reasonably complain that the procedure has treated them unfairly. After all, if each vote has equal weight, then no one voter has greater influence over outcomes than any other voter. And given fairness understood as equal influence, if the preference of the majority prevails, then more participants ought to be satisfied with the outcome than are dissatisfied. On this view, then, majority rule is legitimate insofar as it is a fair procedure that maximizes overall satisfaction.

But even if we accept the utilitarian premise that fair procedures ought generally to leave more participants satisfied than dissatisfied,⁸ there is the possibility that majoritarian procedures may fail to identify a clear social preference. The possibility of majority cycles, first explored by Borda and Condorcet, is central to this concern. Consider the following three individual orderings over three options: $\{a > b > c\}$, $\{b > c > a\}$, and $\{c > a > b\}$. In pairwise contests, a majority chooses a over b , b over c , and c over a , resulting in the collective ranking $a > b > c > a$. In such cases, there is no clear social preference, and, as William Riker (1982) empha-

sizes, outcomes are sensitive to the order of pairwise contests, such that those who control the agenda may be able to manipulate outcomes in their favor. Furthermore, a range of results following Kenneth Arrow suggests that, in general, majority cycles cannot be avoided without also violating at least one of several reasonable assumptions about fairness and rational consistency. Alternative voting schemes, such as those allowing some sensitivity to the intensity of voter preferences, may mitigate these concerns to some extent, but they are generally still vulnerable to forms of strategic behavior. If we hope to defend some form of majority rule on utilitarian grounds, we will want to take these findings into account, and ensure that outcomes really do reflect the majority preference. This turns out to be a rather demanding task.

It has been known since the work of Duncan Black that, under certain conditions, individual preferences can be aggregated into a social preference ordering that is not unstable in the way Condorcet, Arrow, and Riker suggest. For instance, in some cases there may exist a single issue-dimension along which all or most participants can order options according to preference, such that their individual ordering uniformly increases or decreases left to right, or rises to a maximum point (or plateau, if the voter is indifferent over some options) and decreases on either side of that point (or plateau). Black and others have shown that, under these conditions, the most-preferred option of the median voter will defeat or tie any other option in pairwise contests. In such cases, "all voters judge the alternatives consistently with respect to one issue, namely, that measured by the dimension on the horizontal axis. They may, of course, disagree about the best position on the issue, but they do agree that this single issue is the relevant basis for judgment" (Riker 1980, 437). In Riker's assessment, the conditions required for single-peaked preferences along a single dimension are stringent, particularly given the multidimensional realities of democratic politics in most modern settings. And in multidimensional settings, the conditions required for stable outcomes are demanding, both in terms of admissible preference orderings (McKelvey and Schofield; Plott) and institutional constraints (Shepsle).

Much of the work on stable social choices assumes that preferences, while not immutable, are generally exogenous to political processes. Furthermore, information gained through public sources and private exchanges may convey information about the preferences of other participants and the likelihood of particular outcomes, which, in turn, may lead to strategic voting. Political discussion and public deliberation may be informative; they ought not, however, be relied upon to alter preferences or discourage strategic behavior.

But what if deliberative activities could in fact transform preferences, generating convergence along some issue-dimension, as David Miller (60–65) and Dryzek (2000, 42–47) suggest? If deliberative transformation is feasible, then concerns about the ambiguity and vulnerability of majority rule may be misplaced: citizens do not come to the political process

only with antecedent preferences they hope to advance. Nor are voters trying to identify an option that is “correct” in some objective sense. Rather, democratic participation should be understood as a complex and interactive process of discussion, argument, reflection, and careful judgment, aimed at reaching widespread agreement on a suitable resolution to the matter at hand. In this view, political participation is a transformative activity, not merely an epistemic or aggregative exercise.

This interpretation of deliberation and voting should be particularly appealing to some communitarian republicans, who understand personal autonomy in terms of participation in the public life of one’s community. On this view, participation in public life is transformative insofar as it helps us understand the common good and bring our particular interests and expectations in line with what is acceptable in terms of the characteristic meanings and traditions of our community. This is especially so if our preferences are defined in important ways by the horizons of meanings and attachments that our formative communities provide (Sandel, 147–174; Taylor, 3–107).

The hopes for deliberative transformation may, however, be modest at best in modern plural societies, and certainly at the scale of multilateral institutions, members of which have settled interests, along with complex histories, regional and national cultures, and associated values. What if values and interests are firmly held by deliberating parties, after much experience and personal reflection? Why should we expect inclusive public deliberation to transform deeply held beliefs and associated preferences toward convergence along a single issue-dimension? Indeed, as Jack Knight and James Johnson observe, the inclusive ambitions of deliberative democracy may actually thwart such transformations by constantly challenging settled understandings of what is at stake in political conflicts.

Nonetheless, inclusive public deliberation might have the modest transformative consequence of encouraging parties at least to be more other-regarding in their private deliberations. Such deliberation may also have the epistemic consequence of exposing mere error and prejudice (Christiano, 249) and clarifying the various underlying issue-dimensions, thus allowing for separate votes to be cast on distinct issues (Miller, 64–65). But in practice, and especially at broader organizational scales, the relevant dimensions may be so intertwined and controversial as to make deliberative disentanglement unrealistic.

Deliberation as Reason-Giving

We can, I suggest, recover some of the attractive features of the epistemic and transformative arguments by appealing to a standard of justice that dictates appropriate constraints on deliberation, both public deliberation within sovereign states and deliberation within institutions such as state and federal legislatures and multilateral assemblies.

One such standard has been carefully developed by several theorists; for the most part, they have limited their arguments to the internal politics of sovereign democratic states, but their approach is more broadly applicable. This standard requires that democratic authority be justified in terms of reasons acceptable to those ruled, and so legitimacy demands public deliberative processes through which reasons can be scrutinized, debated, and either revised or rejected in light of available evidence and argument. If we doubt that moral and political debates can realistically admit of correct answers, or that democratic institutions can forge consensus on such matters, then we may reasonably conclude that legitimate democratic procedures are those that citizens agree upon just because they allow a variety of facts and opinions to receive an open hearing and do not systematically discount or privilege any particular interests or perspectives.

The reason-giving account of legitimacy is procedural, in that it identifies conditions that a legitimate democratic procedure must satisfy. But as Cohen (1996) and Gutmann and Thompson (1996) have argued, it is not merely a procedural account, because it is grounded in substantive conceptions of citizenship, fairness, and the circumstances of democratic organization, and these conceptions determine the appropriate constraints on public deliberation. That is, “the deliberation that plays a role in the conception of deliberative democracy is not simply a matter of reason-giving, generically understood. The background conception of citizens as equals sets limits on permissible reasons that can figure within the deliberative process” (Cohen 1996, 106). The problem with much actual deliberation is that it has not been disciplined according to appropriate accounts of citizenship and fairness.⁹

According to this account of legitimacy, it is not enough that deliberative procedures could, in principle, be justified to citizens, perhaps in terms of some impartial epistemic standard or utilitarian calculus, articulated and applied by political philosophers and social scientists. Rather, a part of exercising legitimate democratic authority is the public act of justification to those over whom authoritative decisions are binding. In making demands on citizens, legislative bodies, administrative agencies, and appointed experts must explain their reasons and demonstrate that their demands can reasonably be expected to serve the common interests of free and equal citizens (Gutmann and Thompson 1990, 85). And in making claims on each other, citizens must try to justify their proposals in light of shared interests and understandings, rather than, say, merely appealing to passions, prejudices, self-interest, controversial claims of fact, or particular religious values and cultural traditions. It is the public process of mutual justification that situates sovereignty in the *demos*, with the people.

But what if there is no clear *demos*—as is the case, for instance, in the UN general assembly and various councils, where the relevant participants are representatives of sovereign states, many with decidedly non-

liberal societies and undemocratic governments? Or what if the relevant *demos* is characterized by extraordinary complexity, with overlapping identities and allegiances and deep disagreements over values and interests, as in many existing sovereign states and in regional organizations of sovereign states, such as the EU?

I have argued that, in a community or organization of any significant size and complexity, we should expect the epistemic and transformative gains from deliberation to be modest at best, and it seems likely that participants in these settings will not be able to agree on very many substantive reasons. And yet decisions often must still be made in such cases, and they are no less authoritative in practice for the lack of mutually acceptable reasons for them. A virtue of the reason-giving approach is that reasonable parties may accept some democratic procedures as fair, and their outcomes as legitimate, even if the parties disagree with the reasons that are decisive in specific cases. On the reason-giving approach, legitimacy is best understood as a property of appropriately structured and publicly justifiable procedures for offering and evaluating reasons and for making reasoned judgments, and only secondarily as a property of specific reasons offered in particular cases.

This is not to claim that mutually acceptable reasons are not desirable in specific cases. But we must recognize that such reasons are not always available in complex societies, especially those characterized by extensive personal freedoms and a plurality of reasonable religious, moral, and philosophical viewpoints and associated interests. We should be even more pessimistic in the case of multilateral organizations.

Under such conditions, the reason-giving account of legitimacy does not require that participants agree on every reason that is decisive in particular decisions; but the procedures for making collective decisions must themselves be supported by reasons that an overwhelming number of participants would, upon informed reflection, find acceptable. As David Estlund (1997) suggests, even if participants dispute the persuasiveness of specific arguments and the correctness of resulting decisions, they may be able to accept them as legitimate insofar as they originate from a procedure that, in the honest determination of reasonable and informed parties, is more likely to discern persuasive arguments and generate acceptable outcomes than are alternative means of collective decision-making.

How can we reliably infer what reasonable participants would find acceptable "upon informed reflection"? Consider some of the institutional possibilities already discussed: we may get a reliable sense of whether procedures would be acceptable to sufficiently thoughtful and informed parties by employing some combination of local deliberative arrangements and periodic deliberative assemblies comprised of representatives, drawn from many geographic areas, political jurisdictions, and walks of life. This would be a demanding process at the level of multilateral orga-

nizations, insofar as it would require of member states that they allow their own citizens the opportunity to participate in deliberative fora with citizens of other states. And the costs of assembling such groups and providing information and translation services would be considerable, although we might reasonably expect these costs to diminish over time, given advances in information and communication technologies. We would also have to ask sovereign states to provide sufficient incentives to encourage their citizens to participate in such assemblies if called upon, and perhaps even to require that they do so, in much the same way we insist that citizens participate in jury duty in the United States. Thus, the monetary and personal costs of such activities would likely be substantial. My point here is only that we could, in principle (and probably in practice), structure deliberative institutions in ways that diminish the normative significance of the distinction between actual and hypothetical consent.

What procedures would reasonable but very different parties accept upon informed reflection? They would presumably want procedures that allow considerable voice, and a real possibility of influencing outcomes, but that do not privilege any one set of values and interests. When values and interests conflict, reasonable parties would want deliberative procedures that allow provisional agreements to emerge through open processes of contestation, bargaining, and accommodation, without systematically discriminating against any specific parties or interests, and allowing for feasible re-evaluation of terms of accommodation and compensation in light of new information and changed circumstances. This requires protecting spaces of organization and resistance, so that reasonable dissent is possible and fruitful for those who find their distinctive values and interests compromised by democratic outcomes (see Mansbridge; also, compare Pettit).

Fair deliberative procedures must, then, forge and preserve their own cacophonous public spheres. Not only must reasonable dissent be feasible under fair deliberative procedures and within their broader public spaces, but such dissent must also have a realistic chance of effecting some degree of change over time. This is not to suggest that majorities must agree to be persuaded by the arguments of a minority at least some of the time, or that minority interests must prevail in some fixed number of collective decisions. Rather, it is to require that, whether they feel they have won or lost on a given issue, no participant should have grounds for thinking that outcomes are always final, or that democratic procedures have systematically privileged some interests prior to or during public deliberation.¹⁰

Arriving at fair terms of accommodation and compensation in such institutional and broader social settings will, of course, involve difficult judgments, especially in cases where reasonable values and interests conflict. Fair access to deliberative procedures makes sense in this context just

because it provides a way to pool diverse sources of information and to explore a range of schemes for accommodating conflicting values and compensating those whose reasonable interests are compromised after hard decisions are made. The controversial nature of accommodation and compensation in such hard cases would seem to demand that no regulations or contracts be unconditionally binding over time; rather, they should be open to revision in light of new evidence about the burdens imposed on those who have lost out in past decisions.

Such a high degree of openness to revision obviously invites exploitation. Thus, fair access to processes of reason-giving is vital for another reason: claims for redress and new terms of compensation are not merely asserted; rather, they are offered, then critically assessed in open fora that are regulated to ensure that wealth, eloquence, and reputation alone cannot guarantee favorable inequalities of influence over outcomes. Strategic misrepresentation and manipulation will be difficult under fair deliberative procedures. When participants are provided fair access to public processes of reason-giving, self-serving claims generally will not be able to stand up to the sustained public scrutiny that such access encourages. Furthermore, the reputational costs of misrepresentation, once exposed, may be considerable.

LEGITIMACY, REASONS, AND MULTILATERAL INSTITUTIONS

The epistemic and transformative arguments for inclusive deliberation are attractive in several respects, but they are also limited by the scale and complexity of many issues in modern settings. Insofar as we might hope for deliberation to yield the correct answer to a shared problem, the problem must be such as to admit of a correct answer, or at the very least a widely desired outcome. Furthermore, deliberation must be carefully structured and monitored so as to avoid systematic biases in information and to ensure that a diversity of opinions and arguments gain a hearing. And, insofar as we may find deliberative transformations desirable, we must already have an account of justice and associated principles of membership and fairness according to which deliberative practices are constrained.

I have argued that one such account is especially persuasive: legitimate collective decisions emerge from procedures supported by reasons that would, upon informed reflection, be acceptable to those affected by these decisions, procedures that themselves involve the offering and evaluation of reasons for specific policies. This normative stance is relevant whenever and wherever collective decisions lead to significant costs that may be imposed on others. Indeed, fair deliberative procedures for reason-giving are required just because the significance and necessity of imposed costs will generally be contentious matters.

Consider the case of multilateral financial institutions. The World Bank and the IMF wield considerable influence over the lives of people in coun-

tries around the world. Of particular concern are vulnerable populations mired in poverty and too often laboring under inept and corrupt local governments. Officials from the World Bank and the IMF are rarely required to offer reasons to those affected by their decisions or to respond directly to their questions and complaints. The World Bank's social impact assessments are a positive development, but as research by Eva Thorne makes clear, compliance remains a contested issue: projects are too often negotiated with local governments of dubious legitimacy and questionable competence; and although local experts—and many citizens themselves—obviously represent valuable resources to draw upon in planning and implementing projects, they are too often ignored.

Or consider the growing power of some biotechnology corporations, such as Monsanto and Cargill, to dictate the direction of patent law in many countries and of intellectual property initiatives in the World Trade Organization (WTO). These corporations claim exclusive rights to genetic material associated with crops that have existed in common use for centuries, based on claims of discovery and innovation that discount considerations of fair use and informal norms of cooperative resource management. And they lobby governments to impose restrictions on what seeds farmers may use, restrictions that tend to favor these corporations far more than local producers.

The reason-giving account of legitimacy asks us to be skeptical of these and related trends and denies any strong presumption of legitimacy for claims that widespread discretion and independence are essential for effective governance or economic productivity. Representation and expertise are, of course, vital to deliberative democracy, as Mark Warren emphasizes. And, in some cases, representatives and experts can only fulfill vital functions if they are responsive to certain audiences, but relatively insulated from the broader publics they serve.¹¹ But if decisions impose clear costs on many people, and especially if these costs may be imposed by force, then those who bear these costs are right to demand reasons. Legitimate democratic coercion requires *reasoned* consent, which is best achieved through fair deliberative procedures. If, for instance, a financial institution or private corporation is able to influence domestic policy in a given country such that populations will be forcibly relocated or forced to accept a particular standard in agricultural production, then that institution or corporation, as well as the government in question, must answer to those so burdened. The reason-giving account insists that relevant representatives and experts answer directly to those affected by decisions, regardless of prior constituencies: the impact of their decisions creates a constituency that must be addressed in terms of sincere and informed reasons.¹²

This is, of course, a demanding standard of democratic accountability for a world of diverse values and traditions, stark and enduring inequalities, and varied instances of oppression and corruption. An obvious implication of the reason-giving approach is that we should question the

legitimacy of governments that cannot demonstrate considerable accountability to the reasoned judgments of those they claim to represent. But this is not to assert that only so-called Western forms of democracy are legitimate: a wide diversity of institutional forms and political practices is entirely compatible with a commitment to reason-giving as the legitimate basis of authority over others.

Another implication of this approach is that we cannot consistently uphold democracy as valuable in our own domestic affairs, yet deny the value of democracy in organizations such as the World Bank, the UN, and the WTO. To do so is to deny the legitimacy of these organizations as authoritative actors in world politics. And these organizations often *are* authoritative actors, insofar as they are implicated in the distribution of costs and benefits in the world economy and, more pointedly, in exercises of state authority in member countries aimed at securing particular distributions of wealth and opportunities. To retreat from a democratic account of legitimacy in such cases seems to lead us to the view that multilateral organizations are little more than instruments used by the wealthy and powerful to secure their economic interests. While this may be an accurate account of how Western governments and multilateral organizations are (often correctly) perceived in less affluent countries, it is not a satisfactory account of legitimate authority for those who claim to be committed to democracy.

But even if we are persuaded by the reason-giving account of democratic legitimacy, we might nonetheless deny the feasibility of implementing this ideal to any substantial degree. If we want sovereign governments to participate in multilateral organizations voluntarily, then we surely cannot demand too much by way of democratic accountability along the lines suggested by the reason-giving approach. If we ask the World Bank or the UN to ensure the deliberative accountability of corporations and governments to specific affected populations, then some member states would in all likelihood withdraw from these organizations rather than submit to any such interference with their domestic authority. We must therefore accept considerable member-state sovereignty and a principle of noninterference, even if this means pandering to powerful interests or negotiating with corrupt officials and brutal regimes. To do otherwise is to doom effective multilateral cooperation.

This pragmatic concern is important. If, however, we are swayed by the reason-giving account, then the question we should ask is not "What are the practical limits to our democratic aspirations?", but rather, "How can we ensure that exercises of authority are more democratic, wherever they take place and whoever is affected?"

I have argued that if we are committed to democracy, then we are committed to public processes of offering and evaluating reasons as the basis for acceptable uses of coercion. The specific forms that such deliberative practices must take will be dictated by practical considerations about the issues and actors in question, and we should tailor deliberative solutions

in light of the distinctive demands of democratic politics at differing spatial and organizational scales. The contributions to this special issue address precisely the pragmatic concern just outlined; they do so by examining incremental strategies of reform for existing multilateral institutions, with careful attention paid to the differing demands of deliberation and decision-making at various spatial and organizational scales. But what sustains these strategies is a deliberative ideal of democratic legitimacy, grounded in reason-giving, that finds purchase both within and across existing political boundaries.

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NOTES

1. I use the term “representative” broadly here, to include not only elected representatives, but also appointed experts who, in practice, represent those whose lives they influence through their work.
2. Although, on this point, consider McKelvey and Ordeshook (especially 927–931) and Popkin; but see Bartels.
3. See Young and Ladha (632–633) for demonstrations. A binary choice (“innocent” or “guilty” in a trial) is the most obvious case in which this result would apply, but List and Goodin show that the epistemic superiority of majority decisions may also hold for plurality voting among several options. Miller (1986) shows that the condition of unanimous preference can be weakened somewhat. Grofman and Feld interpret Rousseau’s account of the pernicious impact of factions as a claim about voter dependence; but see Estlund, Waldron, Grofman, and Feld (1318–1320) and Ladha on how a plurality of factions may be compatible with the epistemic gains predicted by the jury theorem if diverse factions ensure that voter errors are not strongly correlated. Notice that, given Ladha’s argument, the polarization of opinion across deliberative groups that concerns Sunstein (2000) is not necessarily problematic.
4. If we are swayed by this argument, then we will not necessarily favor supermajority or unanimity requirements. Consider a decision-making body comprised of sincere and reasonably competent representatives possessing roughly similar abilities, each with access to reliable information, meeting together to identify the correct answer to some shared problem. In such settings, the epistemic approach suggests that a simple majority decision is exceedingly likely to identify the correct proposal. But we might then worry about decision rules that allow small minorities to thwart majority judg-

ments: the same logic that leads us to favor the majority ought to lead us to conclude that, the smaller a dissenting minority is, the less likely it is to be correct. Given this, there is a plausible reason to reject a procedure that allows a (probably incorrect) minority judgment to trump the (probably correct) majority judgment; see Dahl (141–142). A similar conclusion might be arrived at after reflecting on the incentives that unanimity requirements may create for strategic reasoning; on this, see Austen-Smith and Banks and Feddersen and Pesendorfer. Whether, and to what extent, these strategic concerns matter in actual group settings is unclear; see the results of McLennan and Coughlan and the experimental findings reported by Guarnaschelli, McKelvey, and Palfrey. Supermajorities in electoral and legislative settings may, however, be valuable for other reasons; see Schofield, Grofman, and Feld.

5. See Bartels on consequences of uninformed voting in U.S. elections that do not seem to support a Condorcet interpretation, and see Page on how mediation of public deliberation through the mass media can distort facts and arguments.
6. There are, of course, well-known problems of coordination in realizing such goods through voluntary contributions by rational agents (Olson).
7. An example of the contentious status of expected costs and benefits in such cases is provided by the public controversy over a leaked World Bank internal memo, drafted by Lawrence Summers in 1991, on the Pareto-improving potential of locating dirty industries in developing regions. On this, see Harvey (366–391).
8. We should not accept this premise without qualification: as Sunstein (1991) suggests, if some preferences are partly constituted by a decision procedure, then the procedure cannot be justified merely by reference to its capacity to satisfy the very preferences it helps generate.
9. The specific content of these accounts may be amenable to deliberative transformation, but a commitment to reasonableness as an orienting principle of democratic authority is probably essential. On this point, compare Gutmann and Thompson (2000).
10. Compare an argument by Miller (1983) and endorsed by Shapiro (1990) that the instability of majority rule in plural settings ensures that political wins and losses are not systematically biased against specific groups. The structure of preferences, and the number and nature of issues on which preferences are held, matter a great deal to the plausibility of this argument: given a deep cleavage along a single issue, majoritarian procedures are prone to generate a persistent minority, rather than favorable instability. In contrast, if citizen preferences form complex patterns across multiple issues, then majoritarian procedures are more likely to generate the desired sort of pluralism; see Miller (1996). We might hope that, at the level of multilateral organizations, the diverse values and interests of member states amount to such pluralism; but we should then worry that dramatic economic inequality (and associated differences in feasible opportunities and basic quality of life) represent a dramatic cleavage among existing sovereign states that undermines any hope for stable political pluralism at the global level.
11. For instance, consider Lohmann (this issue), and see Gutmann and Thompson (1996, 101–127) on secrecy.
12. On this idea, compare Gutmann and Thompson (1996, 146–151, 351; 2000, 169).

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