



assemblage. However, there is no systematic theoretical account of how to construct an overarching ‘assemblage of pluralists’ in *Pluralism* or elsewhere in Connolly’s writings. This is on account of his basic ‘optimism’ that (more often than not) individual practices of ‘agonistic respect’ will suffice to bind the diversely faithful together. This is not optimism I share, but these criticisms do not lessen the significance of this book, which will be debated and read widely.

Mark Wenman
University of Nottingham, UK.

Why Deliberative Democracy?

Amy Gutmann and Dennis Thompson

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In this follow-up to their highly influential *Democracy and Disagreement*, Amy Gutmann and Dennis Thompson present a slightly less detailed and more focused account of their theory of deliberative democracy. All but the first chapter have been previously published and only slightly modified for the book. Taken together, the first four chapters provide a closer look at the theoretical motivations behind deliberative democracy, while at the same time highlighting the unique features of Gutmann and Thompson’s account of deliberative democracy. In addition, Gutmann and Thompson also include two essays that illustrate how their account of deliberative democracy can be used to assess both current healthcare policy in the US and UK and South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Readers who have been keeping abreast of Gutmann and Thompson’s work after the publication of *Democracy and Disagreement* will not find much of anything new in this text, with the exception of the first chapter, which provides a clear and quite persuasive introduction to deliberative democracy. Although the rest of the text consists of essays published over the last decade, a unifying theme is evident. Gutmann and Thompson aim to establish the moral foundations of deliberative democracy, thereby showing that deliberative democrats are committed to more than a certain set of decisions procedures. Gutmann and Thompson anchor their theory in the moral value of reciprocity and, ultimately, mutual respect. As Gutmann and Thompson understand it, reciprocity requires ‘mutually respectful reasoning’, thereby offering an account of deliberative virtue that is more demanding than the conceptions



rooted in prudential reasoning and less demanding than those committed to impartial reasoning (pp. 148, 151). The first four chapters of the book focus, in one way or another, on explicating the moral idea underlying this middle approach — the idea of mutual respect — and the role it plays in Gutmann and Thompson's deliberative theory. For example, in Chapter two, 'Moral Conflict and Political Consensus', the authors argue that the determination of the appropriate scope of a truly democratic political agenda must rest on the idea of mutual respect, rather than the idea of toleration, which falls under the prudential approach to political reasoning. In Chapters three and four, Gutmann and Thompson explicate what may be the most novel component of their account of deliberative democracy: the idea of provisionality. Gutmann and Thompson argue that the idea of mutual respect requires that the parties to debate regard as provisional all of the procedural principles governing the structure of deliberation, the substantive principles that provide the content of deliberations, and even the commitment to deliberation as the appropriate procedure for choosing and evaluating laws and policies.

In the last two chapters of *Why Deliberative Democracy*, Gutmann and Thompson apply their deliberative theory to an analysis of healthcare policy in the US and UK and the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, respectively. Specifically, Gutmann and Thompson argue that their deliberative theory provides a standard for assessing the reasons offered in defense of healthcare policies and in defense of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission as an acceptable alternative to more traditional forms of punishment. The focus on reasons in these chapters once again brings to light the importance of resting a deliberative theory on the value of mutual respect rather than on the 'benign attitude of indifference' that is embodied in the idea of toleration (p. 151). Unlike standards of deliberation rooted in the idea of tolerance, the standards of public reasoning that Gutmann and Thompson defend do not aim to dissolve political disagreement by requiring parties to debate to suppress their particular perspectives. Rather, their deliberative conception pushes parties to public debate to engage in meaningful and respectful discussion, in particular with those who share opposing (even incommensurable) political views. In this way, political debate remains relevant to all those involved because 'participants must recognize the moral merit in their opponents claims' rather than aiming to defeat competing views (p. 153).

It is this conception of political reasoning and debate that makes Gutmann and Thompson's view so attractive. And the essays selected for *Why Deliberative Democracy* clearly highlight this compelling aspect of their view. Indeed, Gutmann and Thompson's view seems to accomplish everything we might want from a democratic theory: a moral foundation that appears difficult to challenge, an approach to dealing with rather than attempting to ameliorate prevalent moral disagreement, and applicability to difficult policy questions. But despite



the comprehensive nature of Gutmann and Thompson's view and the arguments they offer in its defense, they devote little time to a challenge that nearly every deliberative account must meet: how do we realize the deliberative ideal without first establishing the social and economic conditions that deliberation seeks to achieve? And once the socio-economic conditions required for truly meaningful deliberation are realized, what role will be left for the kind of deliberation that Gutmann and Thompson claim is warranted? Gutmann and Thompson never address these questions, though, to their credit, they acknowledge that non-deliberative means may be required to create a socio-economic reality that is conducive to the kind of deliberations they envision. For example, in addressing the charge that extreme inequalities of power and wealth give some citizens greater access to the deliberative, thus jeopardizing the justness of the results of deliberations, Gutmann and Thompson claim that 'the best means of promoting deliberative democracy...may sometimes require refraining from deliberation' (p. 43). Similarly, in the introduction to the discussion of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa, Gutmann and Thompson claim that their deliberative conception can 'justify using non-deliberative means, for example, when such means are necessary to establish the socioeconomic preconditions for a decent democracy' (p. 179).

To be sure, this sounds right, but it does leave the reader wondering whether deliberative democracy can offer any help in addressing the kind of socioeconomic inequalities that make meaningful deliberation impossible. Whether or not the need for non-deliberative measures reveals a substantive weakness in Gutmann and Thompson's view, *Why Deliberative Democracy* is still worthwhile reading for anyone interested in an account of democracy and political virtue resting unashamedly on a thoroughly moral foundation.

Richard M. Buck
Mount Saint Mary's University, USA.