

Foreword

Upon reading *The Political Evaluator*, I challenge the reader on two fronts:

1. to think outside of the box (of social norms)¹
2. to allow the “unforced force of the better [or more sound] argument to prevail” in one’s mind. (Habermas)

I emphasize these two points because my thesis challenges the socially accepted notion of democracy (i.e. voting based democracy) which has likely been engrained in most (western) readers since their childhoods. If the reader is not willing to take on these two challenges and instead adhere steadfastly to the socially accepted view that democracy necessarily entails the act of voting, then I don’t think the reader should read the book as he or she will likely get frustrated and not comprehend the book’s ideas.

I should emphasize further, that upon writing this controversial book, I struggled with the dilemma that most people don’t like to be deceived, and like even less to be undeceived (Ninon de l’Enclos), and yet my book undeceives people, so that it follows that most people will not like the book. My way out of this

¹ An important question is how does one think outside of the box of social norms? My answer with reference to Arthur Schopenhauer, is to “think for oneself”, and be as open-minded as possible. (I.e. be as objective as possible, by not allowing personal and social beliefs influence your decision-making. In other words, evaluate ideas and arguments based on their merit themselves, according to their soundness and consistency, and while being wary of making assumptions with personal and/or social bias.)

dilemma is that I believe that though most people like less to be undeceived (than to be deceived), they really like it more because it ultimately strengthens them. This point is supported by the fact that I provide a viable, sound alternative to what I “undeceive”.

Finally, from a theoretical standpoint, I acknowledge that apparently there is no perfect political system. So it appears to me in collectively determining a political system, one should opt for the system which is in the *better* interests of society as a whole (rather than based for example on the status quo or tradition). This point links partly to the two challenges of thinking outside the box of social norms and the force of the better argument.

Also, though Plato in *The Republic* argues for a philosopher-king to govern society and in *The Political Evaluator* I argue for evaluator-mediators, there is an important difference between the concepts: the direct source of reasons for the philosopher-king’s decisions is from him or herself; whereas, the direct source of reasons for the evaluator-mediators’ decisions is from the citizens of society. And it is this important difference which allows me to apply the notion of democracy to the evaluative system.

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Vancouver, B.C.
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Preface

What follows are eight lectures on political systematic change of western society. The lectures are presented to a prestigious society made up of top academics and distinguished professionals, and due to the controversial nature of the topic, they are presented in secret.

The lectures derive from Peter Thompson, a publicly unknown thinker and visionary, who despite living in poverty and facing near continuous rejection, persevered in his work which focuses on the western political system and an alternative to it. Thompson realizes that most problems of western society and their extension internationally, stem not from particular government policies, but from the western political system itself. Moreover, he realizes that change of the western political system to a viable, sound democratic system, can only occur from the outside in.

It is Thompson's hope that his lectures will demonstrate the importance of looking critically at the western political system itself. Also, he hopes that his lectures will be an impetus for change of the western political system.

THE LECTURES

Grounds for a New Political System

Standing at a podium in a packed filled room, Thompson reflects on how his lectures will be received, and on his opportunity to initiate systematic change of western society, and indirectly and fundamentally redirect the world:

‘Why would the members of the Society accept me when I have not professionally joined them? My only hope lies in them giving way to more reasonable ideas. But due to the uncertainty of thoughts, the members have a way out, and yet only through possibilities in the form of less reasonable ideas.

How do I get them to think outside of the box of social norms? Is there anything I can do? I can certainly encourage open-mindedness through the clarity and soundness of my own thought, but ultimately the members themselves must be open-minded.

Have I gone too far? Are people prepared to consider and accept change?....’

From the corner of the room, the Chair of the Lecture introduces Peter Thompson, and asks the members to refrain from questions until the end of the lecture. A slight applause sounds from the members, and then the room quickly becomes silent.

“Before I begin,” Thompson says, “I would like to thank my long-time friend, William Beattle, for organizing these lectures and the Society for allowing them, and I would like to thank everyone for attending.”

“The material I am about to present is controversial and likely contrary to most of your fundamental beliefs. I ask you to please evaluate my ideas objectively based on their merit rather than based on their relation to your beliefs, or tradition, or norms. With due respect to the members of the Society, I mention this point only to ensure a proper, accurate understanding of what I am about to present.

“The eight lectures I will be presenting entail a critical examination of the western political system defined by voting, and a presentation of an alternative system, evaluative democracy. This evening, I will focus on the critical examination of the western political system and an introduction to the alternative system. I will show, among other things, the necessity for change of the western political system due to its inherent, fatal flaws.”

Thompson looks around the silent room at many inquisitive eyes, feeling a slight tension around him.

“Before beginning any specific examination of the western political system,” Thompson continues, “some general premises need to be established to direct the examination. First, it is my contention due to the comparative nature of human thought, and thereby its circularity and incompleteness within limits, there is *no perfect or complete political system* humanity can know and know that it does. This point is important because it means that all we can strive for is the better or more reasonable imperfect political system. I.e. our goal and that of humanity ought to be to identify and implement the better or more reasonable

imperfect political system over the alternatives. It is my contention, which I will later demonstrate, that some political systems are better or more reasonable than others. I.e. political systems do not have, within limits, equal social value.

“As an extension of this initial premise, I contend that the *basis* for determining the better or more reasonable political system is the *collective* of individuals which comprise society. To favor a particular group of individuals would be contrary to the notion of collective and the implicit agreement of all individuals to form a society for their mutual benefit, rather than stay divided in a state of nature. So the primary basis for determining the better or more reasonable (imperfect) political system is the better or more reasonable system in terms of the well-being of society as a whole.”

Thompson glances around at the members, noticing some of them nodding their approval, and a flash of one member raising his arm and then quickly lowering it.

“Now in turning to the current western political system and eventually my proposed alternative, I will show that the alternative is better or more reasonable in terms of the well-being of society as a whole. Moreover, I will argue that the better or more reasonable system ought to be implemented. I.e. it is nonsensical, in terms of the well-being of society, that what is better for society is ignored in favor of what is not better for society. Though I acknowledge that if the difference between better and not better is insignificant, a change from the latter to the former would likely be imprudent. However, that scenario in my opinion does not apply to the systems in question.”

Thompson glances around the room at the members of the Society, feeling an increase in tension around him.

“It is at this point, I ask the honorable members to join me in thinking outside of the box. I ask this with utmost respect. It is just from past experience, I know that people tend to put up a wall when their fundamental beliefs are challenged. Please refrain from this defensive reaction, and instead engage my ideas openly and objectively. I am certainly not asking you to accept my ideas. I am asking you, within limits, to engage them openly and neutrally.”

“Mr. Thompson,” says the Chair of the Lecture, “let me remind you that this Society is renowned for its objectivity.” Slight chuckles sound from the members. “So your appeal for objectivity, though an important reminder, is unnecessary.”

Thompson nods, and then proceeds, realizing that he is at the point of no return.

“What I mean by the current western political system is a social system to determine who governs, based on the aggregation or total of votes cast, according to some form of majority or proportional rule. In simple terms, the current system is about counting votes and awarding governance to those candidates and party(s) who have the most votes. So the goal of the system from the candidates and parties standpoint is to get the most votes; whereas, the goal from the voter standpoint, is to express his or her political preference. It is here we have an inherent conflict or tension in the current system: On the one hand, we have a group trying to get votes, and on the other hand, we have a group trying to express their political preferences. If we look further, we see that there is an incentive on the part of the candidates and parties to influence and manipulate voters’ preferences, since the system is based on totals of votes. Yet, voters have an incentive to form their own preferences within limits in order to maintain control over their lives. Though I contend that the incentive on the part of candidates and parties

to influence and manipulate voters is far greater, because they are vying for political power; whereas, the individual voter's sense of control is significantly lessened by an equal weighing of votes. I.e. it is extremely unlikely that one vote out of a million votes, for example, would have a significant impact on an election outcome."

Thompson pauses, taking a sip of water from the glass beside him.

"The propensity of the current western political system for influence and manipulation of voters from both unequal incentives between candidates/parties and voters and an emphasis on the total of votes cast," he continues, "is compounded by the fact that the emphasis on the total does not directly include the reasons for votes. This misstep is inconsistent with the primary purpose of the system—collective political decision-making. (I.e. decision-making ought to be fundamentally based on reasons for a decision rather than on totals.) The inconsistency (or lack of emphasis on reasons) stems from the emphasis on total, and the individualistic nature of voting (i.e. voters determine within limits their preferences). These two features of the voting system encourage influence and manipulation of voters. So what we have in the current western political system is a combination of autocracy which is driven by influence and manipulation, and individualism which is established by the individualistic nature of voting itself. I would add further, of the two, autocracy is more significant, because of the greater incentive of candidates and parties to influence and manipulate voters than voters to form their own preferences.

"The current western political system is fundamentally undemocratic," Thompson concludes. Some murmurs sound from the members of the Society.

The room becomes silent.

“In two major works, *The Art of Political Manipulation* and *Populism Against Liberalism*, William Riker has done important work on political manipulation. Among other things, he identifies three main forms of political manipulation in the current western system: ‘manipulation of dimensions’, ‘strategic voting’, and ‘agenda control’. Also, he points out that manipulation of dimensions is the most frequently used manipulation device, because once an idea is entered into the public domain, regardless of its validity, it cannot be taken away. And there are many other academic authors like Johnson (1992), Jacobs and Shapiro (2000), and Jacobs (2001), who document the prevalence of manipulation in the current western political system. Though I should add that once the underlying theoretical aspects of the system itself are understood, the findings and conclusions of these authors should not be surprising. The best description of the current system I know of, as mentioned, is autocratic-individualistic. Though I think Jacobs, in his article, ‘Manipulators and Manipulation: Public Opinion in a Representative Democracy’ (2001), best describes the system in terms of democracy: ‘communicatively corrupted environment’, with the corruption stemming from the heightened manipulation in the system.

“Now the critical question to bring these ideas together is what is democracy?” Thompson asks.

“Again with political systems, I premise at the outset that there is no perfect definition of democracy. So all we can strive for is the better or more reasonable definition of democracy, and see whether or not I am correct in proposing that the current western system does not fall within it.

“With reference to William Riker again, in his work, *Democracy in the United States*, he examines five major

political texts, Pericles' *Funeral Oration* (Athens, circa 431 B.C.), *The Agreement of the People* (Putney (now in London), 1648), *The Declaration of Independence* (Philadelphia, 1776), *Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen* (Versailles, 1789), and *The Gettysburg Address* (Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, 1863) for the meaning of democracy, and from out of which he identifies five key terms: 'freedom', 'liberty', 'equality', 'rights', and 'obedience to law'. Moreover, Dahl in his work, *Democracy and its Critics*, identifies 'self-governance' as a key aspect of democracy. However, I think these six terms are not precise enough. For further precision, I refer to Abraham Lincoln's phrase from *The Gettysburg Address*: [democracy defined as] '[government] of the people, by the people, for the people.' In other words, the people decide which people govern for the people. In essence, democracy according to Lincoln refers to collective-governance—in deciding who governs and the main purpose of the governance. To attain collective-governance, it appears to me that freedom, liberty, equality, rights, and obedience to law are necessary. Though the notion of 'self-governance' is inconsistent with the notion of collective and people.

“So the definition of democracy, and I hope the more reasonable definition in terms of its concepts is collective-governance defined by the people deciding which people govern for the people, and underlain by the freedom/liberty (of citizens), equality (of political participation), (political) rights (of citizens), and obedience to law (which protects citizens' freedom/liberty and rights within limits).

“Now how does the current western political system hold up to this definition of democracy? Is the current political system about the people deciding which people govern for the people? Is the current western society generally characterized by freedom, liberty, equality (of political participation), political

rights, and obedience to law? Is the current political system consistent with the notion of collective? It is here in this latter question, which I think highlights the failure of the current system. I.e. the current system for whatever reason is underlain by the concept of 'self-governance', in which there is almost a free arena of political influence and manipulation, and in which the act of voting, whereby the voter decides for him or herself how he or she will vote, epitomizes the self or individual. There is no infusion of collective in terms of 'the people' and 'all of society' in the current system, except for the insignificant fact that the people vote or at minimum have the opportunity to vote....