

Normative Democratic Theory

Why the human psyche matters most in democratic processes.

Bachelor Thesis

180055 SE Normative Democratic Theory

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Table of Contents:

1 Foreword – p. 1-2

2 Introduction - p. 3-7

3 Main Part - p. 8-16

3.1 Individual Psychology as Foundation - p. 8

3.2 Bottom-Up Transformation - p. 8

3.3 Moral Framework - p. 9

3.4 Practical Conditions - p. 9

3.5 Sustainable Engagement - p. 9-10

3.6 Going in dialogue with different democratic theorists - p. 10-14

3.6.1 Arneson: Democratic Instrumentalism - p. 10-11

3.6.2 Christiano: Democracy as Equality - p. 11-12

3.6.3 Gutmann & Thompson: Deliberative Democracy - p. 12-13

3.6.4 Anderson: Democracy as Way of Life - p. 13-14

3.7 Synthesis and what I uniquely bring into this essay - p. 15-17

3.8 Potential Counterarguments - p. 17-19

4 Conclusion - p. 19

5 Bibliography - p. 20

1 Foreword

In this beginning I want to say a few words, because I think they should be said.

I think many of the formal requirements for a bachelor thesis are not suitable for the times we live in anymore and some never were good at all. The word minimum in my opinion and from my personal experience with my and other texts more often than not, leads to unnecessary repetition and saying something which can be said in a few words on a whole page. A philosophy colleague of mine once told me, that a professor held a whole lesson and as my colleague then summed the information up in two sentences and asked if that right now was what the professor was talking about the whole hour, the professor just said yes. And I so often see that in philosophy papers, were highly intelligent people use their intellect for their best language and write dozens of papers, with for the pages filled rather few information in it. But at least it reads itself smart and they can feel elite, because many people can not understand at all, what is said. Which by the way I declare as one reason why so many different viewpoints can exist on a philosophy of just one person.

If you can not write a text in terms which can not lead to interpretation and can be understood by everyone who can read, you make something incredibly wrong in my opinion.

That was a paragraph for style and the arrogance of so many “philosophers” and now I will come back to unnecessary repetition: A professor I had this semester told the class, that repetition is not only good and necessary, but also wished for in a bachelor thesis. In other words, if you do not know what to write anymore, just write it double or triple, so maybe you then understand it one day. I can really understand the many people, who nowadays say, that philosophy is just an unnecessary field, because it is all talk and nothing else. And not only that, but also talk which is spoken so highly that it goes over the heads of nearly everyone, not because the people are not capable of simple reasoning, but because the speech is framed in a way, that may seem productive, but rather often is just a pufferfish (puffing itself up). And also much too often is full of repetition. Which I for myself do not think is important, because if I do not understand a text I simply can go back and read it again, but if I have understood a part it pains me to have to read it again over and over in the next chapters not knowing if in between that repetition maybe there is something Important I could miss and so to be forced to read unnecessarily.

As well that professor said that originality, in the sense of new generated wisdom is not that important for a bachelor thesis. And I can understand that in a sense, that it is much pressure in today's world to create something new. So much already is thought and said and for bachelor students I guess you could say it's enough to paraphrase theses of big philosophers of the past, compare them and then maybe shortly give your own small opinion on that creation. But then we come to my next part of critique on the system: the KI can do that better than me.

As I heard that originality is not that important for the standards of a bachelor thesis, but that you rather should react to the work of others for most of the paper I in my head was like: okay and where am I needed in all of that? And I am glad that you said you wanted more of my own opinion.

I will write my bachelor thesis completely in my own style. Meaning giving you my perspectives on democracy and how we hopefully more and more can achieve a fairer and sustainable world.

I will write freely, in my own words and will end when I do not have more to say and write. And if that suits the requirement for a "scientific" paper that would be lovely. If not than that is also good how it is.

I would in general say, that we should go away from the rigid institutional rules and go with our own judgement more often, because that is in the end what makes us different than KI, even though we so often get taught to be little machines so we can fit in to these rigid structures.

2 Introduction

Two years ago, I myself tried to help through engaging with politics. I went to the political party I thought would fit best even though I also already had doubts. I had doubts because like nearly every party there is I thought I also would encounter dogma there. But I tried. And the start was rather welcoming, but also odd for me. What I mean with that, is that you are welcomed with the phrase “friendship” which for me is something I would never just say to a person I never met before. I think friendship is way more special than that and conveys not only a sense of belonging, but also mutual respect, trust and support even in difficult times. The same and probably even more loaded with meaning is the word “comrade”, which is a person you made a deeply bonding experience together, went through thick and thin so to say. So how I understand it, a person you can count on: no matter what. It was often used in military context and described a person who was by your side in battle. And its traditionally used in left leaning political parties up to communist ideologues.

So probably its clear by now, that I was trying my luck in the SPÖ. The SPÖ stands for social democratic party Austria. I took it as such, found the phrases thrown to easily around still odd, but just never used them myself. It should be said that the official take from the SPÖ to the phrase comrade is, that its coined through a collective struggle for a unifying big idea and that its a catchphrase for solidarity and they distance themselves from how Walter Ulbricht for example used it (who was a communist and criminal in many eyes). But how I later found out that there is rather poorly, at least where I was in the party, not that much difference between a communist autocrat back in the days and the way it is handled now. At least not, if you have a major difference in opinion. And that phrases like friendship and comrade mean nothing if you do not align with all the concepts the party deems to be right (even if it breaks clean logic and what some would call a common sense).

I was there for I think between one and one and a half year and in the beginning I thought it to be better than imagined. There were good workshops with useful information and good events for building community, like for example giving out free drinks and talking with the people

on public ground, which built up community. When something bad happened in the world, like for example a big earthquake, we collected voluntary donations and it was wholesome to see that so many people want to help. There were also controversial but in my opinion good and thought-provoking topics like for example decriminalizing Sex workers, which in my opinion should be done. And there is a general good awareness for women issues, like health and societal pressures. Also connected with a good awareness on mental health importance, environmental issues, as well as school and infrastructure needs.

In the first year I mainly observed and kept my mouth shut about my own opinions, which also could be a reason I lasted so long. But after a while it really felt more warm and like I found people you could talk with and also discuss more difficult topics, so I tried. And then I was put right back in to my place of doubt and hate on the lack of realm for real and honest discussion. I am a fighter for what I think to be true and right, I always was and will be. But there is a time where even me gets tired and there are definitely realms where it's easier to talk free and openly.

So it was when I really started to speak up my mind again, that the people threw with hurtful phrases around just because they did not have the capacity for real logic, discourse, and most importantly not nearly enough understanding about themselves and their emotions.

Coming for examples, I am really deeply invested in the Situation in Palestine, I feel for everyone and at the moment the persons there should have our solidarity and help the most. So my being in solidarity with Palestine and judging Israel's government for their ongoing land grab was for one of my "colleagues" in the party very close to being Anti-Semitic. But I only found out because I went to talk with her, then she told me that she had these thoughts. I do not know if she already told her theories behind my back. This is also the same person getting loud and angry at many persons and also me and then being surprised when I said that I did not want to have a one on one discussion with her, because of the given reasons. Which then how I was told afterwards, was then not taken seriously by the group, because and I quote: "I am a 1,90m male boxer and she is just a 1,65m female." As if I because of that do not can have the same emotional need for verbal and temperamental boundaries. And that is in the party who tells to be for equal treatment. I encountered the same problem also when I was asked if it not may be, that I treat women perspectives with less value, because I did not take the opinions of two women in the group regarding a certain matter seriously and said so. I

judge the value of a person's opinion by my assessment of how deep, seriously and open minded a person engaged with a topic, I did that there too. So when I answered how the thesis thrown at me could be, when the position I took most seriously came from a third woman. The answer given to me, by the leader of the group in this case a man, was: maybe because I'm not only sexist, but also have a thing good for authority (because the female colleague I listened to the most was second leader). When I then answered to him how he then explains why I was exactly the same not interested in his opinion when he is a man and the leader, he could not hold the argument. But I was lucky that the constellation was as it was. Because if not no matter how pure and unsexist my way would have been, they could just have pinned it on me. The last disagreement was also with this man, who was the boss. After all we already discussed he then asked me, how he can work with me when he constantly has to worry about me criticising his work. And I was like are you serious? That is what makes a democracy and keep in mind even the party's name is social DEMOCRATIC party Austria. I also told him that one of the first things Putin did was cancel a puppet show which made fun of politicians, so for him not to worry about critics. That is just the first thing a totalitarian does.

In the end of this debate he then kicked me out anyway, because "some people would feel uncomfortable with me being there." The reasons for that I had already shredded in pieces before.

So how it comes that even in democratic countries and in democratic parties we have great difficulties when it comes to real differences in opinion?

I will first start with a hypothesis I developed in another seminar work:

"Nietzsche now argues that none of these ethics can withstand examination for objective value. He poses questions. For example: Why is it "good" to be courageous? (referring to virtue ethics), to which I would spontaneously respond: because it helps people. Nietzsche continues asking: Okay, but why is it good to help people? A possible answer here would be (Kant's deontology): "Because I can only want that it becomes universal law that one helps people in need. Only through this does trust in others become possible, and we can live together in societies based on trust." Another answer (utilitarianism) could be: "Because rescuing people in need results in the greatest possible qualitative and quantitative wellbeing." Nietzsche remains unimpressed and asks further: Okay, I understand that, but how do you arrive at the idea that a society in which we trust each other is preferable to one in which we don't? And how do you come to think that the greatest happiness of all is a desirable goal?"

Nietzsche wants to get to the bottom of the moral systems just discussed, because in his opinion, this is where the blind spot of all of them is hidden. All known moral systems assume an intrinsic value, an a priori given good, but if one asks long enough, this good can only be traced back to God, refer to a subjective feeling of well-being, or end circularly in itself. (All statements attributed to "Nietzsche" are freely invented by me, in accordance with his philosophy.)”

(Taken out of my seminar work: Seminararbeit Moral Hannah Arendt, 180022 PS and translated by Claude (KI).

The (interim) conclusion that I want to draw from this exploration (which I have primarily developed through engagement with the lecture: 180026-1 VO-L "The Blind Spot of Morality," with Professor Michael Staudigl) is: that there is no objective morality, at least from our current standpoint, logically ascertainable. That is now my starting point, there is no objective right and wrong and that is also the first thing many people are not ready to accept and even if they say so most of the time when they are confronted with choices they do not like many want to challenge it on such an “objective” basis.

(Also interesting in this context is: Waldenfels, Bernhard. "Der blinde Fleck der Moral. Überlegungen im Anschluß an Nietzsches Genealogie der Moral." Zeitschrift für philosophische Forschung 47, no. 4 (October-December 1993): 507-520.)

In my thinking, we create the world. We are ultimately free to make choices. Choices I may find good or bad, but choices. And so I would answer to the question, which I derived from Arendt's 1965 analysis of moral collapse in her lectures on evil (Arendt, 2006): What if the majority of a people subjectively agree that certain people or groups of people deserve to live more, or even worse, that certain people (or groups) do not deserve to live?

I think this is the most extreme and outrageous claim someone can make and if a majority of people makes such a claim (and it happened before) then that is most difficult to bear. And still I still think there is no objective moral who would bring me in a position to dismiss their sentiment. There is though a very personal feeling of unfairness and most of all empathy for victims of arbitrary cruelty, a feeling (even if maybe not an objective moral) so strong, that I in every situation I see it, I personally decide to defend the person in need, according to my own principles and values. A feeling which is shared also by other individuals and can inspire even more, otherwise we would not yet have principles of human rights and charters to defend people we think deserve it. So when we start with ourselves and stand up for what we think is right in every situation, in my opinion there is hope in a world without universal guidance

from above. Or as Nietzsche said: In a world where god is dead. And beyond this feeling within, that you may feel, or not:

I can also question the validity of their claims on basis of logic: In the past it was said by some that black people have smaller brains, which through some other peoples scientific work was proven wrong. It should not have been just believed in the first place, but that is again my opinion. It was also said by Aristotle that women have less teeth, which also for far too long then was taken for a fact, but for some other peoples practical wisdom (just looking in women's mouth and counting the teeth) was also proven wrong. Same can be said about indigenous people and every other nation, tribe and religion. Because so often these stereotypes are just mantling a deep personal hate. It so masks not an objective truth, but a subjective feeling.

And even if the stereotypes really have some truth behind it, for example that men are more bodily violent than women. Which can clearly statistically be stated. For example, that over 85% of murder in Germany is done by men and 73% of suicides.

(Bundeskriminalamt. Polizeiliche Kriminalstatistik 2023. Wiesbaden: BKA, 2024.
Statistisches Bundesamt. Todesursachenstatistik 2023. Wiesbaden: Destatis, 2024.)

You can make and I certainly would make the argument that it comes down to every single person and that you should not convict everyone which belongs to a certain box beforehand.

I took this example because the box "men" is a relevant category I myself live with and so it would not be good for me if for example the argument came through that, because more men are physically violent every men has to be imprisoned. And so I can give my best to make the most sufficient argument to be seen as an individual and also that imprisonment would not help anyone. And still according to my understanding of freedom and democracy I could not say that there is an objective moral which dooms, when the majority of the people in a given circle would decide for making a generalized case against this group of people I bodily clearly belong.

In other words. Everyone and everything has to bear the consequences of everyone and everything we decide.

And also following that logic everyone may subjectively feel anxious, threatened, bored or happy about that, but there is no objective way that helps us.

That is not to say that we can not and should not try to try and hopefully succeed in creating and maintaining a system that suits all of us. And I think when we take as a foundation that there is no moral right and wrong. We just all have to talk with each other to create what we intersubjective feel to be right. And I think for that deliberative democracy is Best! Because following my logic no single men or women can know the way alone. We all can together.

Now it is about how we apply it? And that is probably the most difficult thing we face.

3 Main Part:

Individual Psychology as the Foundation of Democratic Processes

Central Thesis: Democratic systems fail primarily because individuals lack the psychological capacity for genuine deliberation, not because of flawed institutional design. The solution requires individual transformation that enables authentic engagement with others.

3.1 Individual Psychology as Foundation

I personally think political systems fail because people can't handle disagreement without becoming defensive or authoritarian. For that to change people need courage to maintain logical consistency while remaining open to transformation. So the real problem is not institutional design but whether participants can engage authentically and let the other participants do the same. Can the participants listen to each other and reflect on their own feelings while doing so. And can I and every other person speak their own truth even when that may challenge the other.

3.2 Bottom-Up Transformation

Change starts with individuals transforming themselves, so the more calm I get, the more I understand myself and the more I think about what I speak before I do so. The better I can

navigate my being together with others. And following that I will explain the onion principle, where changes continue to begin with the personal/family sphere and expand outward, continuing maybe in your neighbourhood, village, then the next city, then the country and so on.

This principle is so useful, because you start with rather “small” issues and maybe you recognize that they are not that small after all. Before you continue with even more difficult tasks. And in other words, how can you think of bringing harmony to many people, when you can not even bring it to yourself and the closest persons to you. I personally witness how these authentic individual changes create ripple effects scaling to collective transformation.

The “Onion Principle” employs Jordan Peterson's (2018) approach of gradual development from the inside out (“clean your room first”), Peterson, Jordan B. 12 Rules for Life: An Antidote to Chaos. Toronto: Random House Canada, 2018.

3.3 Moral Framework

As I already wrote above I think that no objective morality exists, but logical consistency should apply to whatever values people hold, so you can and should challenge contradictions between stated principles and actions and when many people decided openly and freely for shared rules and that we as people want to live by them, they can become law. So subjective frameworks can become intersubjective through dialogue and of course morality itself is in each and everyone of us, so even if there may be no objective truth about it we can and should stay for what we think to be right.

3.4 Practical Conditions

I would say Democracy requires “good people” capable of living their values, engaging authentically, and response-able (feeling good about and wanting) to go into dialogue. And of course listen when needed and giving the other persons also the realm to express themselves. These Environments then automatically allow real discourse without punishing dissent and if a structure then does not fit anymore we build alternative structures rather than only critiquing existing ones.

And Democracy desperately needs realms where the material needs for people can be fulfilled. Some change can not be made by the individual who just barely gets its living together, but has to come from people with the money and the connections (in general

recourses) to make sure that everyone has an at least safe and in the best case optimal environment for personal engagement with topics which really matter for themselves and society. In this context important for me to name is Thomas Christiano, who wrote a very convincing argument about democracy as a way to provide equality of recourses, because it is measurable and through that everybody has a good standard of living (Christiano, 2009, pp. 31-50).

3.5 Sustainable Engagement

I think being an example and convincing through this is the most sustainable way for lasting change. Because you just do what is best for you and do not coerce or force someone to go your way, but when someone asks, then you really can help the person. That principle of being a light for others is fairly known, but seldom seen. Because it seems for many to be easier to change nothing themselves and critique others often. And we are a good distance away from sustainable engagement, so it seems fitting. When we change ourselves and listen to others about who and how they want to be, maybe even when we really can and they really want our help, help them and let us be helped, it can all be beautiful. If others do decide to choose differently the most sustainable thing you can do within your power is to accept while maintaining your principles. This for me is persistent peaceful example over time.

3.6 Going in dialogue with different democratic theorists.

3.6.1 Arneson: Democratic Instrumentalism:

Arnesons position is that democracy has no intrinsic value and just is good if it produces better outcomes.

“the democratic instrumentalist ... opposes the suggestion that each adult person has a fundamental moral right to be admitted as a full member of some political society, entitled to run for office and vote (on a one-person-one-vote basis) in free elections that select the public officials in top government posts and directly or indirectly determine the content of the laws and policies that the government enforces on all members of the society.”

(Arneson, Richard J. “The Supposed Right to a Democratic Say.” In *Contemporary Debates in Political Philosophy*, edited by Thomas Christiano and John Christman, 197-212. Oxford:

Blackwell Publishing, 2009, p. 197.)

Following my own logic there also can not be an inherent moral right, this for me would undermine that there is no objective right and wrong regarding morality. But if there is no objective right and wrong then even if a decision seems right from a certain stand point it could be completely different from another and just with everyone involved we can have the whole picture. And with that really each and everyone is responsible. So even when we than might make a seeming error, we do it together and can arrange and better us all through it. He also has the idea of the subset example I would add to this my version of the onion principle engagement and would say that both of them are good and necessary for an even broader participation. Someday something like an universal participation may be possible, but just if these systems also had and have their rightful place.

With many of his points we share common insights and experiences, for example that even motivated people sometimes can not deliberate meaningfully, this for me I saw in the SPÖ. He calls that “rational voter ignorance”. Also even that very moral and conscientious people can end up not voting well because the costs of becoming truly informed are prohibitive. These two very important points can show us where we have to work on. The first is about lack of individual psychological capacity and that introspection and working on yourself in every way possible is needed. And the second shows that there is also a limit for peoples capacities, which is also good not hindering. These people already do good and can be strengthened through others who help them get information easier, or they also themselves may have areas where they still see, that they invest a lot of time and energy in for what they subjectively feel are not good ways, so when they change that, they have more time for what really matters for them and their environment. And we also can look if the institutional design we created is still useful, or if it is hindering us now and is stealing us time. If so the persons who feel to have the power to change this, can do this very important work.

3.6.2 Christiano: Democracy as Equality

Christiano's position is that democracy is justified because it provides equal resources for citizens to influence collective decisions about society's shared features, making it the only way to give equal consideration to everyone's interests in matters that affect all.

"Justice, we have seen, requires that each person's interests be given equal consideration. This equal consideration of interests implies that individuals be given equal resources, with which to understand, elaborate, and pursue their interests."

(Christiano, Thomas. "Democracy as Equality." In *Contemporary Debates in Political Philosophy*, edited by Thomas Christiano and John Christman, 31-50. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2009, p. 44.)

As I mentioned earlier, I also see that personal development would be a lot less painful for many people and can happen a lot more faster, when everyone has a good standard of living. So for some people it is nearly impossible at this point to get to a position, where they have the realm to really think about everything and everyone and these people in my opinion should not have to also do that, but first look at being in a better place for themselves. And that they should be helped with that. And there is a perfect connection with Christiano, because he is looking at it from this perspective. I think its not only not contradicting to say that people should look at themselves first and work on being a psychological stable and really reasonable person and that the environment and the other people are also very important factors. So Christiano delivers a crucial and equally important puzzle point, where first the work is done to provide people with the same access to information, the same access to education and in general equal recourses. And I think that is beautiful and is actually very much intertwined with the process I describe. So, it can happen simultaneously that people help other people to better their outwards living standards and that people carefully work on themselves on a deep personal level. Often even these two steps happen in the same person at the same time, or a bit before or after in time. Because every time you have an outward struggle, if you look at it you can see a lesson for yourself and every time you learned a personal lesson, you handle outward struggles and personal challenges differently.

The Connection Points:

Reciprocal Development: Material security enables psychological work (people with basic needs met can engage in self-reflection), while psychological development makes people more effective at creating equitable systems.

Voluntary Scaling: Christiano's institutional reforms create space for my "onion principle" to work. When people have equal resources, authentic communities can form naturally without coercion.

Complementary Timeframes: Institutional changes can provide immediate structural improvements while psychological development works on longer timescales, with each helping the other.

Together we hopefully can create a functional democracy where people can handle disagreement constructively.

3.6.3 Gutmann & Thompson: Deliberative Democracy

Their Position: Democracy requires reason-giving processes where citizens justify decisions through mutually acceptable arguments.

“...define deliberative democracy as a form of government in which free and equal citizens (and their representatives), justify decisions in a process in which they give one another reasons that are mutually acceptable and generally accessible, with the aim of reaching conclusions that are binding in the present on all citizens but open to challenge in the future.”

(Gutmann, Amy, and Dennis Thompson. "What Deliberative Democracy Means." Chapter 1 in *Why Deliberative Democracy?* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004, p. 7.)

They support my thesis in that their four characteristics all require psychological capacities I emphasize:

1. Reason-giving (vs. power assertion)
2. Accessibility (empathy/communication skills)
3. Binding decisions (accepting disagreement)
4. Provisional/dynamic (openness to change)

- Their own examples (Iraq War, Oregon healthcare) show failure when participants lack these psychological qualities.

- “The economy of moral disagreement” they describe (Gutmann & Thompson, 2004, p.7) requires exactly the kind of emotional regulation I developed.

While they are focusing on institutional design and procedures rather than individual psychology and assume that people can learn to engage in reciprocal reason-giving through proper processes, which is also true in my opinion and while they saying that citizens and their representatives should try to find justifications that minimize their differences with their opponents (Gutmann & Thompson, 2004, p.7), which I also think to an extent is true, the different angles from where is looked at can be very much combined and in so far as in every case either with institutions as frame givers or citizens freely coming together and building a consensus, in every case there are individuals involved, whose mental capacities decide about fail or success.

3.6.4. Anderson: Democracy as Way of Life

Her Position: Democracy has non-instrumental value as a culture expressing equality, sympathy, autonomy, and collective intelligence.

“As a culture, democracy consists in the freewheeling cooperative interaction of citizens from all walks of life on terms of equality in civil society.”

(Anderson, Elizabeth. “Democracy: Instrumental vs. Non-Instrumental Value.” In *Contemporary Debates in Political Philosophy*, edited by Thomas Christiano and John Christman, 213-227. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2009, p. 214.)

She is strongly supporting my thesis in the way that democracy requires “democratic culture” in civil society, which is exactly what I mean by needing “good people”. And that democratic institutions amount to little unless citizens enact, in their day-to-day interactions, a spirit of tolerant discussion and cooperation, as well as that her three levels (membership, government, culture) mirror the onion principle.

“Successful integration requires not just contact, but willing and active cooperation. In such cooperative associations, citizens learn to treat one another as equals: as eligible for inclusion in collective projects, entitled to an equal voice, whose concerns merit equal attention and response.”

(Anderson, Elizabeth. "Democracy: Instrumental vs. Non-Instrumental Value." In *Contemporary Debates in Political Philosophy*, edited by Thomas Christiano and John Christman, 213-227. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2009, p. 218.)

Our key alignments are that she emphasizes that democratic activities express “sympathy”, “autonomy”, and “intelligence”, which all are psychological capacities.

She quoted in her work a sentence from someone in this context: “To take as far as possible every conflict which arises – and they are bound to arise – out of the atmosphere and medium of force, of violence as a means of settlement into that of discussion and of intelligence is to treat those who disagree – even profoundly – with us as those from whom we may learn, and in so far, as friends. (Dewey 1981: 227–8)”

("Democracy: Instrumental vs. Non-Instrumental Value." In Contemporary Debates in Political Philosophy, edited by Thomas Christiano and John Christman, 213-227. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2009, pp. 217-218.)

This perfectly describes my approach even already in and ever more post my time in the SPÖ. Because I took every discussion, every talk and every different person as a mirror for myself to see where I engaged in a way that contributed to the atmosphere, so where I had flaws in my sustainable contribution. And see now that even though you can have perfectly solid arguments and the way you deliver them and the place you create them from also counts. It is a combination of standing up for yourself and your arguments in a way that is understandable and treats the other person as an equally important individual, with all the tools you got for understanding, for emotional dignity and for being treated and treating the other with love.

3.7 Synthesis and what I uniquely bring into this essay.

They all three miss the psychological prerequisites for their theories to work.

Arneson's Gap is that Instrumentalism requires capable deliberators to produce good outcomes and his "rational voter ignorance" problem could be solved by people with my psychological development.

Gutmann & Thompson's Gap is that deliberative processes require participants who can actually engage in reason-giving. They design procedures but do not address what happens when people psychologically can not or will not participate authentically

Quote showing the gap: “Citizens are justified in relying on experts if they describe the basis for their conclusions in ways that citizens can understand; and if the citizens have some independent basis for believing the experts to be trustworthy...”

(Gutmann, Amy, and Dennis Thompson. “What Deliberative Democracy Means.” Chapter 1 in *Why Deliberative Democracy?* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004, p. 5.)

But what if the citizens refuse to understand the information, or not believe in the experts credibility, even when given the evidence for it. Or when the experts have blind spots of their own because they do not engage in important personal work.

Anderson's Gap is that democratic culture requires sympathy, autonomy, and intelligence, but she doesn't explain how people develop these capacities. She describes what democratic culture looks like but not how to create it when people lack the psychological foundation.

Quote showing this gap: “In such cooperative associations, citizens learn to treat one another as equals: as eligible for inclusion in collective projects, entitled to an equal voice, whose concerns merit equal attention and response.” But how do they learn this?

("Democracy: Instrumental vs. Non-Instrumental Value." In *Contemporary Debates in Political Philosophy*, edited by Thomas Christiano and John Christman, 213-227. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2009, p. 218.)

My Bridge: The Missing Psychological Dimension

My thesis could complete their framework:

For adding to Arneson: Democracy can be instrumentally valuable, but only when participants have the psychological capacity for genuine deliberation. To reach that there is a whole bundle of literature to name a few direct here:

Haidt, Jonathan. "The Emotional Dog and Its Rational Tail: A Social Intuitionist Approach to Moral Judgment." *Psychological Review* 108, no. 4 (2001): 814-834.

Gross, James J., and Oliver P. John. "Individual Differences in Two Emotion Regulation Processes: Implications for Affect, Relationships, and Well-Being." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 85, no. 2 (2003): 348-362.

Goleman, Daniel. "What Makes a Leader?" *Harvard Business Review* 76, no. 6 (1998): 93-102.

And I will write some of the most important lessons I learned here:

1. Recognizing patterns: I identified my tendencies in reacting and then with complete awareness choose which are useful and which are not and I still do this every day, even it gets easier because a lot of patterns I found as errors I now already threw out of my system.
2. Seeking balance: I explore how to maintain inner peace while staying engaged with principled environmental awareness.
3. Understanding my mental state: It depends heavily on the people around you, so you should make yourself realm for all your needs, so you have power for events and talks that you feel to be of importance.
4. Periodic practice: Some meditation and reflection, but not necessarily in a systematic practice, but how you feel it to be productive and useful.

For Gutmann & Thompson: Reason-giving processes work, but require individuals who can maintain logical consistency while staying open to transformation. You can reach that through continued engagement with argumentation, in books, in dialogue and group settings & connected with the steps above.

For Anderson: Democratic culture is essential, but it emerges from individuals capable of authentic engagement with difference, which would be my good people insight. That comes with a very foundational insight, which would be that: every flaw and mistake I may see in another person is at least to some degree also within me and the more I accept and explore the complexities, differences and shortcomings within myself, the more understanding, patience and acceptance I have for differences in other people.

My SPÖ story demonstrates all three gaps: people who claimed democratic values but lacked the psychological capacity for authentic democratic engagement.

My Solution: Individual transformation that develops the capacity for principled engagement without exhaustion. So modelling change, not forcing it and maintaining authenticity while accepting the choices of others.

3.8 Potential Counterarguments which may come up:

The Scale Problem: How does individual transformation scale to societal change?

I would say patient modelling and community building will lead to the Best results. Through the work on myself, I together with good friends have built up a group of over 100 people who create and send each other good events created by, with and for good people. So there is a good community growing. Adding that with this personal connection, before a political disagreement comes in, you handle situations where a problem comes up differently as if you have a different opinion and maybe also big argument with a person you do not know well, or not at all. It works also to send events and petitions connected to politics. Which is not self evident given, that there are very different types of persons in this group. If this group furthers to grow and if it holds even if severe disagreement comes up is up to see and it should be said that the scope is yet different than a democracy with millions. It is a so far small case success and we will see how it continues. My take away of that is that through building authentic relationships with myself, friends and others, I've discovered greater political alignment and more productive disagreement than I experienced in formal political structures. While the group focuses on connection and events, the trust and understanding developed through personal relationships creates conditions where political discussions become more constructive. This suggests that personal and political development are deeply interconnected and that the psychological capacities needed for authentic community building are the same ones required for effective democratic engagement.

The Time Problem: Can individual transformation happen fast enough to address urgent political crises? I would say there is no real alternative, because felt pressure, even if it is just for countering another, in the past has almost always also been counterproductive. Not to say that there is not an urgency for action, but blind stumbling will make it worse. If we take our

time to really think and feel what is right, we will make it better and when staying calm, in that process not again create mistakes we have to sort out later. At least as few as possible.

And there is also different level at which individual transformation happens. To take an example which is from an environmental standpoint crystal clear, that a more vegan diet would be better for the climate. What now can be done and is done by many already switch to a more vegan diet. That changes demands and many companies now already produce also and sometimes purely vegan products. Also it is experimented on something called in vitro meat, that is the scientific method, which could solve the gap between eating meat and the bad effect on animals and the environment. These both are done already and growing. So we have a lot of people who not only see, but also act on good change for living in a good environment. What also can be done is, that the funding of meat products by the EU is stopped, because of that unfair boost of meat products the meat is cheaper than the vegan product. And many people do not even know that their tax payer money goes in to this specific funding. So politics funds a product which is overall badly for the environment, without the knowing of many people who contribute the money and prevent an at least fair competition just of the products itself, let alone that we could think about subsidizing things which would actually be healthy for the environment.

In my opinion we should take the time we really need, because answering coercion with coercion changes nothing, not in a sustainable way. And in other words, be the change you want to see in the future, already in the present.

And inventions like in vitro meat, or bacteria who eat microplastic, or any other scientific achievement could change the urgency of different sorts in a matter of seconds, when there is a new breakthrough and when then implemented for change.

Of course it can be that we with all that fail and that the people are not soon enough ready for the changes necessary for a healthy earth. That is why also changes in institutional design and a fair distribution of resources are important. And maybe there are many more creative and voluntary ways for change. And while if we still fail that would in my eyes be very sad to see, we live together on this earth and we win and suffer together. Because of a possible failing to switch to disguise, manipulation and coercive methods is just not effective and maybe even brought us to the place we are in right now.

This approach acknowledges a difficult reality: if voluntary psychological development proves insufficient to address existential challenges like climate change, the consequences may be severe. However, abandoning voluntary participation for coercive measures would

destroy the democratic foundation I and many others seek to preserve. With the choice for potential environmental catastrophe through democratic means versus guaranteed authoritarian control (which results from abandoning voluntary participation in decisionmaking) favours maintaining human agency and dignity, even at significant risk. And I want to say that the other option, and with that I mean authoritarian regimes, includes guaranteed significant risks as well and there are many, like bodily and mental illnesses, who create millions and billions of treatment costs (which if not there could be used to further climate agenda for example) for everyone. So maybe the voluntary democratic approach may be more effective overall. At least it is more humane and if you really care about human life's and their well being, that is the approach which I think works Best.

The Privilege Problem: Does your approach require resources/stability that many lack?

I focus on good people wherever they are and whichever resources they feel to have. Then build from there. I think each and everyone knows best what they can contribute and for some people that means to scale back for some time, because they contributed so much for their families and society and for some that means to continuing and maybe even growingly using their recourses like time, emotional capacities and money for what they feel to be important projects. All in which scale possible and needed.

4 Conclusion:

Anderson says: "We do not vote in order to have more acts of voting in the world. The world is not better for containing more such acts than fewer" (Anderson, 2009, p. 223) and I agree. I think: The world is better for every person who gets their hope back in politics, informs them voluntarily and acts in a way that creates a more harmonic being together as people. I think that authentic engagement itself transforms both participants and observers.

And because I think so, I will again go into politics this evening to use all my reflection, new generated knowledge, recourses and power to help to create what I think to be a better world. And I encourage everyone to do the same□

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