

Going Beyond Deliberation: The Democratic Need to Reduce Social Inequality

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Contemporary democratic theory has difficulty coping with the fact of social inequality. The predominant model in democratic thought, deliberative democracy, holds that democracy depends upon different political interests engaging with one another in such a way that genuinely fair policy outcomes can be achieved. More specifically, the deliberative model associates democracy with a debate in which the different sides exchange reasons for their views that their opponents can accept. Through this reason-giving process, deliberative democrats argue that policy debates can be decided according to who gives the strongest reasons for their position, and that policy outcomes can be based on reasons that everyone involved can endorse. Multiple deliberative thinkers, though, have recognized that the political debates they describe could not be unaffected by the structural inequality that characterizes our broader society. The impact brought by such social qualities as poverty or racial and gender discrimination cannot be bracketed within political debate, and so even the proper deliberative interaction of competing political viewpoints cannot be said to be genuinely fair and democratic. The deliberative thinkers who have acknowledged this have thus had to shoe-horn into their arguments an insistence that social and economic inequality must also be significantly reduced if democracy is to be achieved. The problem, then, is that the type of political debate that the theory equates with democracy is understood to be basically undemocratic under the unequal social conditions we actually confront. Given that structural social inequality diminishes the democratic character of this form of ideal political debate, it is apparent that deliberative practices cannot be simply relied upon themselves to give us the necessary reduction in inequality. This inequality

evidently represents a major democratic problem in its own right, and its reduction demands primary attention within democratic theory, but the deliberative thinkers' focus on ideal political debate leaves them able to only perfunctorily note that this inequality must be diminished. Indeed, to address this inequality, it appears we must specifically *depart* from deliberative practices.

In this paper, I will argue that two currently less prominent models of democratic thought—participatory democracy and cosmopolitan democracy—are better suited for helping us integrate the need to reduce social inequality into our thinking about democracy. They have this capacity, I claim, because they do not focus their thinking primarily on an ideal interaction of competing political viewpoints, but on specific changes in our social relations and political institutions that are necessary to remedy structural inequality. With these theories, democracy is not mainly associated with a fair debate between those who benefit and those who suffer from this inequality (for such a debate cannot be assumed to be so “fair” and uncorrupted by broader inequality), but with the actual victory of those who suffer. It is not up for debate whether the inequality should be reduced, and it is instead considered democratically necessary that the inequality be reduced. This is something that deliberative democrats must agree to once they add in the requirement that social inequality must be ameliorated in order for deliberation to actually be democratic. But once this has been conceded, the deliberative thinkers must also admit that deliberation itself is not particularly democratic at all under our current circumstances, and is perhaps more likely to be undemocratic by giving off the appearance of fairness and equality that are not really there. Participatory and cosmopolitan democratic thinkers emphasize significant social and political change more than a particular form of debate, and are able to conceive of the democratic necessity of reducing inequality without contradicting (as deliberative democrats

must) the defining trait of their theories.

This paper aims to help move current democratic thinking away from the deliberative model and toward the participatory and cosmopolitan models, and to clarify the relationship of each of these latter two models to the deliberative model. It is widely believed that deliberative democracy coheres quite well with the principles of participatory and cosmopolitan democracy, and that deliberative democracy in fact incorporates or even improves upon the insights of these other two models. With participatory democracy, the prevailing view is that this model primarily seeks a political debate that allows for direct participation by ordinary citizens, and deliberative democracy is seen as detailing how exactly this debate would work. This depiction of participatory theory, however, does not hold up to close scrutiny. The major works on participatory democracy have not focused on achieving a certain kind of policy debate, and have instead focused on democratizing *non-governmental* authority structures,¹ and on reducing social and economic inequality in general. Participatory theorists have given particular attention to the workplace, claiming that individuals' capacity to participate in political debate is affected by what extent they can make decisions on how they carry out their work and what their work is used to create. They have further argued that a more genuinely democratic politics cannot come without a great reduction of the present social and economic inequality, because the socially disadvantaged know they face profound limitations—relative to the well-off—in being able to exercise an effect on political processes, and thus tend to become apathetic. Participatory democracy, therefore, primarily associates democracy with measures and policies that reduce social and economic inequality and that democratize the typical work experience of many individuals. Deliberative democracy can seem like an extension and improvement on

¹ This is simply to say, authority structures outside the typical institutions of government.

participatory democracy if we accept that participatory democrats are mainly seeking a type of ideal policy debate and have just neglected to provide details on how the debate should work. But I claim participatory democrats have not provided these details because they recognize that under unequal social conditions, the quality of debate is not the essential matter for democratization (since the debate will be corrupted by the inequality), and that we instead are in need of measures and policies that reduce inequality in order to achieve democracy.

In the case of cosmopolitan democracy, which challenges the primacy of the nation-state and seeks to build truly democratic regional and global institutions, deliberative thinkers have held that their principles can be extended to the global realm, and that proper deliberation is at least as crucial to global democracy as is any particular change in global institutions. But as with participatory democracy, I argue that the cosmopolitan democrats' own lack of focus on an ideal form of debate reveals an important gap between their theory and deliberative democracy. The cosmopolitan theory emphasizes how within our already-existing regional and global institutions (UN, IMF, etc.), there are advantages available to wealthy, powerful nations that allow those nations to exercise disproportionate influence over those institutions' decision-making processes. The theory thus stresses the need for specific changes to these institutions that will remedy this inequality. Also, prominent cosmopolitan democrats have pointed out how, as long as there continues to be vast inequality in resources between wealthy and poor nations, even a genuine formal equality among nations within global political institutions will be largely ineffectual, for the resources of wealthy nations will continue to provide far greater effective opportunity to influence the institutions' policy outputs. These thinkers insist on policies such as required overseas aid from developed to developing nations in order to democratically alter the current global relations. For deliberative thinkers to insist on such policies, they would need to concede

that specific policy outcomes are more essential to democratization than a deliberation among competing viewpoints that has an indeterminate outcome. Deliberative democrats must contradict the central feature of their theory (deliberation) in order to effectively account for global social and political inequality. Cosmopolitan democrats do not define their theory by proper policy debate among competing interests, and so are better suited to conceive of the democratic necessity of reducing inequality under unequal conditions.

There are a number of concessions that are made when deliberative democrats require that social inequality be significantly diminished in order for genuinely democratic political debate to be possible. Among these concessions are: (1) that when we have a fundamentally unequal society, an “equal” debate among different political viewpoints is more undemocratic than democratic, because of the greater material resources available to the socially advantaged, as well as the greater impact the advantaged can have on the ordinary discourse surrounding policy issues; (2) that we must often consider only certain sides in a political debate to represent “democracy” (i.e., those seeking to overcome structural social inequality), and consider other sides (i.e., those seeking to protect the advantaged) to represent “oligarchy” perhaps, but not democracy; (3) that we must associate democracy more with actual outcomes that benefit the socially disadvantaged, and less with an indeterminate process in which competing viewpoints reach policy compromises; and (4) that practices in which the disadvantaged take direct action toward overcoming inequality—perhaps in the form of a workers’ strike or a protest that disrupts the comfortable existence of the advantaged—are deserving of “democratic” classification, even though such practices seek to compel concessions from the advantaged in a way that ideal forms of debate would not allow.

These points will all be addressed in the course of this paper, though I will give particular

emphasis to the last point. It could be said that while participatory democracy and cosmopolitan democracy show us the type of democratic changes that are demanded by our current unequal conditions, these theories perhaps neglect to tell us what particular practices are consistent with the pursuit of this democratization. In other words, participatory and cosmopolitan democracy do not appear to give us any specific *mode of participation*² that could be said itself to be a manifestation of democracy, in the way that deliberative theorists see the practice of deliberation as a manifestation of democracy. But, if participatory and cosmopolitan democracy were to give more attention to the “modes of participation” that are consistent with their thinking, they could further demonstrate, in contrast with deliberative democracy, their value as democratic theories that can cope with social inequality. Within more recent deliberative theory, there has been a tendency to acknowledge that certain types of coercive, “non-deliberative” modes of participation (strikes, marches, protests, etc.) are more appropriate than deliberation for dealing with unequal social conditions.³ This further indicates the lengths deliberative democrats must stray from their primary principles in order to account for the conditions we actually confront; by upholding the appropriateness of *non*-deliberative practices for dealing with our current reality, deliberative thinkers must admit that deliberation is to be largely disregarded in coping with current conditions, even as they maintain that deliberation must be central to our democratic thought. The participatory and cosmopolitan models, which are defined by significant social and political changes aimed at overcoming inequality, require no contortions to endorse the types of non-deliberative practices that are often necessary for achieving those changes. This topic of *modes of participation*, and the way that participatory and cosmopolitan democrats are able to

² Jeffrey Hilmer, “The State of Participatory Democratic Theory,” *New Political Science* 32, no. 1 (2010): 43-63.

³ Archon Fung, “Deliberation Before the Revolution: Toward an Ethics of Deliberative Democracy in an Unjust World,” *Political Theory* 33, no. 2 (2005): 397-419.

accommodate such modes that deliberative democrats must contradict themselves in order to accommodate, completes the argument for participatory and cosmopolitan over deliberative democracy.

This paper will begin with a discussion of deliberative democracy, and an exploration of this theory's inadequate means for dealing with a structurally unequal society in a way that is consistent with the theory's primary principles. I will then address participatory democracy, and will show how the assumption of deliberative democracy's coherency with (and even superiority over) participatory democracy overlooks participatory theory's productive focus on the overcoming of social inequality over and above any ideal form of political debate. I will then show how cosmopolitan democracy extends this emphasis on the reduction of inequality to the global realm, and thus displays a similar divergence from deliberative democracy. Finally, I will discuss how participatory and cosmopolitan democrats have given rather minimal attention to the modes of participation that they endorse, and how greater attention on this topic, and on their capacity to accommodate non-deliberative modes of participation in particular, can further elevate their theories above deliberative democracy.

Deliberative Democracy

The theory of deliberative democracy bears distinct influence from John Rawls and Jurgen Habermas,⁴ and especially important to its origins are Rawls's notion of "public reason"⁵ and Habermas's description of "opinion-formation in a mobilized public sphere."⁶ As the theory

⁴ Rawls and Habermas do have their differences, but as they both note, those differences are "familial"; see Jurgen Habermas, "Reconciliation Through the Public use of Reason: Remarks on John Rawls's Political Liberalism," *Journal of Philosophy* 92, no. 3 (1995): 109-131; and John Rawls, "Political Liberalism: Reply to Habermas," *Journal of Philosophy* 92, no. 3 (1995): 132-180.

⁵ John Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 253.

⁶ Jurgen Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996), 306, 360.

developed in the 1990s, then, its principles primarily held that deliberators should argue for their various policy positions in terms of reasons that others can be reasonably expected to endorse, and that the outcome of deliberations should be determined simply by the most convincing such arguments within the deliberative forum; this deliberation was meant to produce policies that could be reasonably endorsed by all, to allow equal opportunity to influence policies, to prevent broader power structures from determining policy, to lead deliberators to consider the common good, and to minimize the intensity of disagreement between deliberators.⁷

More recently, deliberative theory has evolved beyond the narrow focus on an exchange of reasons that are each strictly oriented toward the common good. Seyla Benhabib represents the early deliberative view that policies must be articulated “in discursive language that appeals to commonly shared and accepted public reasons,” and she denies the deliberative validity of “greeting, storytelling, and rhetoric.”⁸ On this view, the kind of reasoned argument which impartially seeks the common good is necessary to achieve deliberative democracy. John Dryzek, on the other hand, allows “argument, rhetoric, humour, emotion, testimony or storytelling, and gossip,” with the only requirement being “that communication induce reflection upon preferences in non-coercive fashion.”⁹ This view is supported by Simone Chambers, who

⁷ James Bohman, *Public Deliberation: Pluralism, Complexity, and Democracy* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996), 5; James Bohman, “The Coming of Age of Deliberative Democracy,” *Journal of Political Philosophy* 6, no. 4 (1998): 401-402; Joshua Cohen, “Deliberation and Democratic Legitimacy,” in *Deliberative Democracy: Essays on Reason and Politics*, eds. James Bohman and William Rehg (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1997), 74, 77; Jack Knight and James Johnson, “What Sort of Political Equality Does Deliberative Democracy Require?,” in *Deliberative Democracy: Essays on Reason and Politics*, eds. James Bohman and William Rehg (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1997), 288; Jon Elster, “Deliberation and Constitution Making,” in *Deliberative Democracy*, ed. Jon Elster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 104; Amy Gutmann and Dennis Thompson, *Why Deliberative Democracy?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 7.

⁸ Seyla Benhabib, “Toward a Deliberative Model of Democratic Legitimacy,” in *Democracy and Difference: Contesting the Boundaries of the Political*, ed. Seyla Benhabib (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 83.

⁹ John Dryzek, *Deliberative Democracy and Beyond: Liberals, Critics, Contestations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 1-2.

argues that rhetoric can be genuinely deliberative,¹⁰ and by Jane Mansbridge et al., who seek to incorporate self-interested policy proposals within the deliberative model.¹¹ Even more significantly, Archon Fung resolves that under non-ideal social conditions, deliberative democrats cannot maintain an unqualified commitment to deliberation, and he establishes a correlation between the non-ideal extent of social conditions and the extent to which deliberative democrats may turn toward coercive, non-deliberative forms of participation.¹² For Fung, the more unequal our conditions are, the more we must make use of non-deliberative practices, and this contention reveals the lengths deliberative democrats have more recently gone to take account of the apparent unsuitability of deliberative principles to unequal social conditions, and to allow for recourse to practices that do not strictly adhere to deliberative norms.

The foundational principles of deliberative democracy do surely appear to represent an abstraction from our unequal social conditions. These principles indicate that the effects of unequal social status can be neutralized within the deliberative forum, as long as deliberators are equally willing to give reasons that can be accepted by others, and are all given an equal opportunity to speak. Joshua Cohen establishes that all deliberators are equally bound to “find reasons that are compelling to others,”¹³ and he maintains that the conditions of equality are met because “the existing distribution of power and resources” does not determine who gets to speak.¹⁴ We could certainly find this to not hold sufficient recognition of the possibility that such apparent equality within the political forum will bear influence from the effects of social and

¹⁰ Simone Chambers, “Rhetoric and the Public Sphere: Has Deliberative Democracy Abandoned Mass Democracy?,” *Political Theory* 37, no. 3 (2009): 323-350.

¹¹ Jane Mansbridge et al., “The Place of Self-Interest and the Role of Power in Deliberative Democracy,” *Journal of Political Philosophy* 18, no. 1 (2010): 64-100.

¹² Fung, “Deliberation Before the Revolution,” 397-419.

¹³ Joshua Cohen, “Procedure and Substance in Deliberative Democracy,” in *Democracy and Difference: Contesting the Boundaries of the Political*, ed. Seyla Benhabib (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 100.

¹⁴ Cohen, “Deliberation and Democratic Legitimacy,” 74.

economic inequality experienced by deliberators outside the forum. Rawls attempts to address this issue with his “original position,” in which the deliberators’ ignorance of their social status ensures that deliberation will “not be affected by the contingencies of the social world.”¹⁵ But while the original position is an interesting abstract thought experiment, it provides little guidance for coping with the unequal social conditions we actually confront, and the ways these conditions can affect political deliberations.

For example, in a debate between business interests and labor unions over collective bargaining rights, each side can likely make its case in terms the other side could “reasonably” be expected to endorse. The business side can appeal to reasons based on freedom, equality, the public good, etc., by claiming that too much money and benefits are guaranteed to workers and that society as a whole will benefit from decreasing unions’ bargaining power; the labor side can also appeal to reasons based on freedom, equality, the public good, etc., by arguing that society has a greater interest in protecting economically vulnerable families than in ensuring the unfettered advance of business dealings. When deliberative theory calls for these two sides to exchange reasons, and for the outcome of deliberation to be determined by the most convincing argument, we have reason to question whether it is effectively accounting for the structural and discursive privileges enjoyed by the business side, privileges which have their root in the broader social context. This is a type of critique that has been lucidly made by such thinkers as Lynn Sanders, Iris Young, John Medearis, and Tali Mendelberg and John Oleske, who have each argued that deliberation cannot be isolated from the power structures within the broader society.¹⁶ It is certainly prudent to have concern over whether the greater social resources

¹⁵ Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 23.

¹⁶ Lynn Sanders, “Against Deliberation,” *Political Theory* 25, no. 3 (1997): 347-376; Iris Young, “Communication and the Other: Beyond Deliberative Democracy,” in *Democracy and Difference: Contesting the Boundaries of the*

available to certain individuals rather than others, and the greater impact that socially advantaged individuals can exercise over the common discourse surrounding pressing policy issues, could ever be prevented from prejudicing policy debate from the outset.¹⁷

All the same, there are deliberative theorists who insist that significant reduction of social and economic inequality is essential to deliberative democracy, while others do not. James Bohman states that some “social conditions will have to be corrected” for deliberative democracy to be achieved, and that “large social inequalities are inconsistent with public forms of deliberation in egalitarian institutions.”¹⁸ Jack Knight and James Johnson endorse “redistribution of income and wealth” because “citizens must possess a certain level of income and resources” in order to be effective deliberators.¹⁹ Dryzek is on the other side of this discussion, worrying that “if we regard effective distribution as a necessary prerequisite for deliberation we may be in for a long wait.”²⁰ Similarly, Amy Gutmann and Dennis Thompson assert that “disadvantaged groups usually manage to find representatives from within their own ranks who are...effective at articulating their interests and ideals,” thus implying that those disadvantaged by social inequality are usually not at a disadvantage within a proper deliberative forum.²¹

Political, ed. Seyla Benhabib (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 120-135; Iris Young, “Activist Challenges to Deliberative Democracy,” *Political Theory* 29, no. 5 (2001): 670-690; John Medearis, “Social Movements and Deliberative Democratic Theory,” *British Journal of Political Science* 35 (2005): 53-75; Tali Mendelberg and John Oleske, “Race and Public Deliberation,” *Political Communication* 17, no. 2 (2000): 169-191.

¹⁷ An important recent addition to this mode of critiquing deliberative theory has been made by Samuel Bagg, who relies on research in cognitive psychology to argue that deliberation is rather ineffective as a “means” to neutralize power relations, because humans tend to perceive whatever new information they encounter during deliberation in ways that reinforce their current political views and commitments, thus casting further doubt on the capacity of deliberation to challenge power inequities; see Samuel Bagg, “Can Deliberation Neutralize Power?,” *European Journal of Political Theory*, forthcoming.

¹⁸ Bohman, *Public Deliberation*, 21.

¹⁹ Knight and Johnson, “What Sort of Political Equality Does Deliberative Democracy Require?,” 307.

²⁰ Dryzek, *Deliberative Democracy and Beyond*, 172.

²¹ Gutmann and Thompson, *Why Deliberative Democracy?*, 50-51.

But, even if we focus only on Bohman, Knight, and Johnson's position (that the reduction of social inequality is encompassed by deliberative democracy), deliberative theory still cannot address this concern regarding social inequality without compromising its commitment to deliberation. Once we agree that such inequality represents a democratic problem in its own right, deliberative theorists must give up their commitment to equal reason-giving, one way or another. On the one hand, if the reduction in inequality is supposed to be the result of deliberation, then the principles of deliberation are discredited. The outcome of deliberation is supposed to be indeterminate, and if we insist that deliberation result in reducing social and economic inequality (e.g., by deciding to redistribute wealth), we would clearly be determining the outcome ahead of time—an outcome that real-life deliberation under present circumstances may not likely achieve. Thus, if deliberation itself is meant to ameliorate this inequality, deliberative theorists must privilege some reasons (i.e., those advocating redistribution) over others, which negates the democratic validity of an equal exchange of reasons. On the other hand, if the reduction in inequality is meant merely to be a necessary prerequisite to genuine deliberation, then it is recognized that we must look to something besides deliberation to achieve democracy. Under our current unequal conditions, democratization could not be equated with the achievement of deliberation, for it must be conceded that deliberation now is going to be corrupted by the inequality, and so we must instead focus on reducing inequality through other means so that deliberation can then become democratic. Deliberative democrats cannot, then, simply require that social inequality be taken care of before we can start deliberating, since they must admit that deliberation itself cannot solve this democratic problem, and that deliberation will be undemocratic so long as this problem still exists. These thinkers must effectively concede that the central feature of their theory (deliberation) cannot address a (perhaps *the*)

fundamental democratic problem brought by our current social conditions.

While certain deliberative thinkers have granted that democracy also requires the reduction of social inequality, the message of their theory is still that greater deliberation is itself the essential task in creating a more democratic world than we have at present. These thinkers intend to say that more deliberation *right now* is the most important project we can undertake for further achieving democracy. But if we doubt that such a debate could actually be *democratic* without assuming away exactly the major ills (i.e., social inequality) that most need to be addressed, and if we take that additional requirement of reducing social inequality seriously, then the centrality that deliberation currently receives in democratic theory is seen to be untenable. There has been evolution in deliberative theory in more recent years, which has included modification on certain theorists' part of their commitment to deliberation under circumstances of inequality, and I will address this evolution further below. For now, it is noteworthy how the foundational principles of deliberative democracy have difficulty attending adequately to the fact of social inequality, and how those principles must be contravened to a significant degree when deliberative thinkers seek to take that inequality more seriously.

Participatory Democracy

Participatory democracy, which was a prominent model of democratic thought in the 1960s and 1970s, has been widely regarded as effectively incorporated, and improved, by deliberative theory. Thompson²² and Robert Goodin²³ each see deliberative democracy as inheriting and expanding participatory principles. Fung sees both theories as encouraging individuals to put the

²² Dennis Thompson, "Deliberative Democratic Theory and Empirical Political Science," *Annual Review of Political Science* 11 (2008): 511-512.

²³ Robert Goodin, *Innovating Democracy: Democratic Theory and Practice After the Deliberative Turn* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 266.

public good above their private interests,²⁴ and Fung and Erik Olin Wright describe deliberative democracy as “participatory democratic regeneration.”²⁵ For Denise Vitale, deliberative democracy represents an improvement on participatory democracy because the former describes the specific forums for direct citizen involvement in policy debate that the latter seems to endorse in merely general terms.²⁶

The theory of participatory democracy has been outlined most fully by Carole Pateman and C.B. Macpherson.²⁷ Pateman explains that “The theory of participatory democracy is built round the central assertion that individuals and their institutions cannot be considered in isolation from one another.”²⁸ These institutions are not political institutions alone, for the way in which individuals experience the structures of power in the broader society cannot but influence their capacity to influence political decision-making structures: “democracy must take place in other spheres in order that the necessary individual attitudes and psychological qualities can be developed.”²⁹ Pateman thus emphasizes the importance of “a participatory society,” and of recognizing that encouraging “the participatory process in non-governmental authority structures requires...that the structures should be democratised.”³⁰ She places particular focus on the workplace, and provides empirical evidence to show that “the development of a sense of political

²⁴ Archon Fung, “Minipublics: Deliberative Designs and Their Consequences,” in *Deliberation, Participation and Democracy: Can the People Govern?*, ed. Shawn Rosenberg (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 169.

²⁵ Archon Fung and Erik Olin Wright, “Thinking about Empowered Participatory Governance,” in *Deepening Democracy: Institutional Innovations in Empowered Participatory Governance*, eds. Archon Fung and Erik Olin Wright (New York: Verso, 2003), 40.

²⁶ Denise Vitale, “Between Deliberative and Participatory Democracy: A Contribution on Habermas,” *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 32, no. 6 (2006): 753-754.

²⁷ Benjamin Barber calls himself a participatory theorist, but his theory focuses on simply encouraging all citizens to transform their private interests into public interests, and he says this issue deserves primacy over economic democratization, which signifies a wide divergence from the work of Pateman and Macpherson; see Benjamin Barber, *Strong Democracy: Participatory Politics for a New Age* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

²⁸ Carole Pateman, *Participation and Democratic Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 42.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 20, 45.

efficacy does appear to depend on whether [an individual's] work situation allows him any scope to participate in decision-making."³¹ This workplace democratization requires concurrent pursuit of "the substantive measure of economic equality required to give the individual the independence and security necessary for (equal) participation."³² And, she stresses that the point here is not to conceive of how such democratization can be perfectly achieved, but to take present circumstances into account and "modify...authority structures in a democratic direction."³³ More recently, Pateman has reaffirmed these tenets, stating that participatory democracy "is about changes that will make our own social and political life more democratic, that will provide opportunities for individuals to participate in decision-making in their everyday lives as well as in the wider political system," and that we must focus on "making substantive steps towards creating a participatory democracy."³⁴

Macpherson similarly identifies participatory democracy with the understanding "that the workability of any political system depends largely on how all the other institutions, social and economic, have shaped, or might shape, the people with whom and by whom the political system must operate."³⁵ He points to social inequality as the root of much of the apathy we see within modern citizenries—because those who are socially disadvantaged know they must exercise far greater effort than the well-off to have an effect on political processes—and, like Pateman, he highlights the democratization of work relations as a crucial step toward reducing exclusive control of the political system by powerful interests.³⁶ He also identifies a "vicious circle" here, though, pointing out that while we may need a reduction in social inequality to increase

³¹ Ibid., 53.

³² Ibid., 43.

³³ Ibid., 74-75.

³⁴ Carole Pateman, "Participatory Democracy Revisited," *Perspectives on Politics* 10, no. 1 (2012): 10, 15.

³⁵ C.B. Macpherson, *The Life and Times of Liberal Democracy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 4.

³⁶ Ibid., 88, 103-104.

democratic participation in politics, we may equally need an increase in such democratic participation in order to reduce social inequality.³⁷ For a solution, he describes a process in which a democratic change in either the social or political dimension of this vicious circle will affect the other dimension, and he explains how “we may look for loopholes anywhere in the circle, that is, for changes already visible or in prospect either in the amount of democratic participation or in social inequality.”³⁸ And, again like Pateman, Macpherson rejects the attempt to “simply try to draw mechanical blue-prints of the proposed political system,” and focuses on the movement in the direction of participatory ideals by asking “what roadblocks have to be removed, i.e. what changes in our present society” are necessary to further democratize politics and society.³⁹

Participatory democrats are not necessarily opposed to the idea of reason-giving described by deliberative democrats, but they also have not committed to such reason-giving as though this practice were equivalent to democratization. Pateman explains that participatory democracy works toward allowing individuals “to exercise the maximum amount of control over their own lives and environment,”⁴⁰ and this idea of control cannot be grasped simply as engagement in reason-giving on policy matters. This participatory idea entails the greatest possible control over one’s path in life—from one’s choice of work and family life to one’s capacity to influence political institutions—and it focuses our attention on transforming society in order to rectify the prevalent social threats (e.g., structural inequality) to such individual self-government. When deliberative thinkers like Bohman, Knight, and Johnson insist on the

³⁷ Ibid., 99-100.

³⁸ Ibid., 101.

³⁹ Ibid., 98-99.

⁴⁰ Pateman, *Participation and Democratic Theory*, 43.

reduction of social and economic inequality, they hit on an important anti-deliberative point: under conditions of structural inequality, we move in the direction of democracy by overcoming that inequality, not by instituting a deliberative process with an indeterminate outcome. In its advocacy of this type of social transformation, participatory democracy has given no priority to the practice of deliberation. Participatory theory continuously pursues democracy, rather than continuously pursuing deliberation.

One concrete example of participatory democracy that diverges from deliberative principles is the participatory budgeting institutions which got their start in Brazil in the late 1980s, and have since expanded to about 250-300 cities worldwide.⁴¹ Typically a municipal program, participatory budgeting aims at democratizing political decision-making structures by opening up budgetary policy decisions to ordinary citizens, and by allowing local communities to select projects and proposals that best suit their needs.⁴² Participation in these programs is incentivized because the level of turnout in neighborhood-level popular assemblies (the initial stage of the policymaking process) determines the number of elected representatives from each neighborhood at the “regional budget forums,” where budget priorities for the region are finalized.⁴³ Perhaps most significantly, participatory budgeting has had the effect of increasing the political participation of historically excluded low-income citizens, and of producing policies which benefit those citizens (whereas previous budgetary processes primarily benefited the well-off)⁴⁴; these results have been accomplished because the poor can be free of the normal barriers to their political influence, and because participatory budgeting has made use of a “Quality of

⁴¹ Brian Wampler, “A Guide to Participatory Budgeting,” in *Participatory Budgeting*, ed. Anwar Shah (Washington, D.C.: The World Bank, 2007), 22; Graham Smith, *Democratic Innovations: Designing Institutions for Citizen Participation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 33.

⁴² Wampler, “Guide to Participatory Budgeting,” 24, 37.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 23-24, 28, 33, 49-50.

⁴⁴ Smith, *Democratic Innovations*, 34, 43-44; Pateman, “Participatory Democracy Revisited,” 11-12.

Life Index” which ensures that poorer regions receive a greater percentage of budget spending than wealthier regions.⁴⁵ Participatory budgeting’s successes exhibit participatory theory’s commitment to specifically ameliorating the effect of social inequality on political processes. Deliberative theory, by contrast, has difficulty making room for participatory budgeting. Goodin and Dryzek exclude it from their definition of a deliberative institution, because participation in the budgeting process is not necessarily statistically representative and is meant to be skewed toward low-income citizens⁴⁶; Fung and Thompson each classify the program as deliberative, but they also claim it does not do enough to lead citizens to put aside their own self-interest and pursue the public good.⁴⁷ This again exhibits the divide between deliberative democrats’ primary emphasis on giving reasons that are acceptable to all (as well as their assumption that reasoning can insulate political forums from the effects of social inequality) and participatory democrats’ focus on specifically advancing the interests of the socially disadvantaged.

Participatory theorists have also endorsed the policy of universal basic income, which further illustrates the distinction between participatory and deliberative democracy on the capacity to account for social inequality. A universal basic income is unconditionally guaranteed to all citizens by the government, and is large enough on its own to ensure the citizens’ basic needs are met. Such a policy would signify an attempt to remedy social and economic

⁴⁵ Wampler, “Guide to Participatory Budgeting,” 30-31, 36, 40, 51, 52. Not all examples of participatory budgeting are equally successful—in some cases, decision-making power is not genuinely delegated from the government to the citizens, and the poor have not increased their participation or seen more favorable policy outputs; see Brian Wampler, *Participatory Budgeting in Brazil: Contestation, Cooperation, and Accountability* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2007), 6, 7-8, 39, 72-73, 143-144, 172, 274-275, 281. Participatory budgeting in Europe, in particular, has largely left citizens as consultants rather than decision-makers; see Yves Sintomer, Carsten Herzberg and Anja Rocke, “Participatory Budgeting in Europe: Potentials and Challenges,” *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 32, no. 1 (2008): 164-178.

⁴⁶ Robert Goodin and John Dryzek, “Deliberative Impacts: The Macro-Political Uptake of Mini-Publics,” *Politics & Society* 34, no. 2 (2006): 221-222.

⁴⁷ Fung, “Minipublics,” 179; Thompson, “Deliberative Democratic Theory and Empirical Political Science,” 514-515.

inequality, and could also have a democratic impact on the political realm, the other side of Macpherson's "vicious circle"; this policy can open opportunities to individuals who were previously forced by poverty into alienating occupations, while also avoiding, because it is universal, stigmatizing its recipients in the way Medearis⁴⁸ observes welfare policies often do.⁴⁹ Some deliberative theorists may endorse such a policy, but they cannot do so without effectively advocating something quite different from deliberative democracy—either they must determine the policy outcome of deliberation before deliberation has taken place, or they must concede that the work of democratization must be done with non-deliberative means.

Cosmopolitan Democracy

The model of cosmopolitan democracy developed in the 1990s and early 2000s, and has emphasized the increasing complexity of the issues confronting modern individuals, and how, in many cases, these issues can no longer be reasonably deemed to be relevant to only one particular nation. As with participatory democracy, deliberative democrats have seen their own theory as capable of accounting for the concerns raised by cosmopolitan democracy. Dryzek in particular states that the norms of discourse espoused by deliberative democracy are even more essential to a global democracy than the creation of democratic global political institutions.⁵⁰

David Held has been perhaps the most prominent cosmopolitan democrat, and he points out that "the sovereignty of the nation-state has generally not been questioned" in democratic

⁴⁸ Medearis effectively critiques Gutmann and Thompson's view on welfare, showing how welfare policies can reinforce the stigmatized social status of welfare recipients; see Gutmann and Thompson, *Democracy and Disagreement*, 273-306; and John Medearis, "Deliberative Democracy, Subordination, and the Welfare State," in *Illusion of Consent*, eds. Daniel O'Neill, Mary Shanley, and Iris Young (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2008), 208-230.

⁴⁹ See the various selections in *Basic Income Worldwide: Horizons of Reform*, eds. Matthew Murray and Carole Pateman (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 12, 13, 38, 39, 41, 46, 74, 75, 78-79, 124, 188-189, 240, 241.

⁵⁰ Dryzek, *Deliberative Democracy and Beyond*, 115-139.

theory, and he argues that, when we hold to such an assumption, “Problems arise...because many of the decisions of ‘a majority’ or, more accurately, its representatives, affect (or potentially affect) not only their communities but citizens in other communities as well.”⁵¹ Held identifies a number of contemporary policy issues on which a particular government’s decisions and actions will have significant impact on other nations—including the building of a nuclear plant, an increase in interest rates, the “harvesting” of rainforests, and decisions regarding security, arms procurement, and AIDS⁵²—and he remarks that such complex global issues require “a system of governance which arises from and is adapted to the diverse conditions and interconnections of different peoples and nations.”⁵³ The cosmopolitan model would thus “seek the creation of regional parliaments (for example, in Latin America and Africa) and the enhancement of the role of such bodies where they already exist (the European Parliament) in order that their decisions become recognized, in principle, as legitimate independent sources of law”; it would also pursue “the formation of an authoritative assembly of all democratic states and agencies...[that] would become an authoritative international centre for the consideration and examination of pressing global issues...”⁵⁴ In essence, the cosmopolitan model holds that democratic theory’s focus on the nation-state has been increasingly rendered obsolete by our globally interconnected conditions, and that our political institutions (which again are not Dryzek’s concern) must suitably evolve to account for this fact.

Because we already have many global political institutions, cosmopolitan democrats claim that we must have a primary focus on moving these institutions in a democratic direction.

⁵¹ David Held, *Models of Democracy*, 3rd ed. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), 290, 291.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 291.

⁵³ David Held, “Democracy and the New International Order,” in *Cosmopolitan Democracy: An Agenda for a New World Order*, eds. Daniele Archibugi and David Held (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995), 106.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 108-109.

For Daniele Archibugi, “a central role should be given to the United Nations organization in the transition towards a new world order.”⁵⁵ He argues for the creation of a “second assembly” within the UN’s General Assembly that would follow the logic of proportional representation, in order to counterbalance the General Assembly’s adherence to equal representation, which allows “fewer than 10 percent of the world’s population” to “potentially cast the majority of votes in the General Assembly.”⁵⁶ He also objects to the undemocratic quality of the UN Security Council, which allows “a few members...[to] invalidate the decisions of the majority” with their veto power, and he suggests that the veto be abolished.⁵⁷ Mary Kaldor places attention on the International Monetary Fund, and recommends that “National or bloc currencies [be] linked to a genuine form of international money guaranteed by international monetary institutions which are democratically accountable – i.e., a democratized IMF.”⁵⁸ For cosmopolitan democrats, the existence of institutions such as the UN and IMF exhibits the increasingly global quality of important policy issues. These institutions currently display many undemocratic features, though, and thus require democratization.

I argued above that participatory democracy possesses more adequate means than deliberative democracy for addressing the threat to democracy represented by social inequality. I argue that cosmopolitan democracy carries a similar advantage over deliberative democracy, and I maintain this even though there are certain individual cosmopolitan thinkers who seem to be satisfied with an alteration in global political institutions. Archibugi mainly focuses on the more *political* aims of putting “some constraints on governments’ exercise of sovereignty,” and giving

⁵⁵ Daniele Archibugi, “From the United Nations to Cosmopolitan Democracy,” in *Cosmopolitan Democracy: An Agenda for a New World Order*, eds. Daniele Archibugi and David Held (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995), 122.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 138-142.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 150-152.

⁵⁸ Mary Kaldor, “European Institutions, Nation-States and Nationalism,” in *Cosmopolitan Democracy: An Agenda for a New World Order*, eds. Daniele Archibugi and David Held (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995), 88.

“the inhabitants of the planet...a political representation beyond their borders and independently from their national governments.”⁵⁹ Kaldor similarly emphasizes how new global political institutions must primarily be “open and accountable to public opinion” through some type of electoral mechanism; she does mention that cosmopolitan democracy should also involve guarantees of “economic and social rights” for individuals, but she does not specify what these rights would be.⁶⁰ It could be said that these thinkers’ focus does not adequately attend to the possibility that such global political representation would be undemocratically impacted by the social divide between, for instance, the globally rich and poor. Richard Falk, however, is a cosmopolitan thinker who tackles head-on the importance of reducing global social inequality to the achievement of democracy on a worldwide scale. While he recognizes a “global spread of political democracy,” he stresses the importance of global social movements in challenging the power inequities that characterize the current global order, and in challenging, for instance, the “inter-state complacency about environmental issues” that such power inequities have helped produce.⁶¹ He also coins the term “globalization-from-below” to refer to the “transnational democratic forces” that seek to counteract (for the good of the globally disadvantaged) the “globalization-from-above” that has been enacted by powerful economic interests for their own benefit; he further points out that Articles 25 and 28 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights already guarantee an adequate standard of living for individuals, but have been simply ignored, and he urges that such a standard should be actually upheld.⁶² Held takes a similar position to Falk, insisting that cosmopolitan democracy entails such social measures as basic

⁵⁹ Archibugi, “From the United Nations to Cosmopolitan Democracy,” 134.

⁶⁰ Kaldor, “European Institutions, Nation-States and Nationalism,” 89, 91.

⁶¹ Richard Falk, “The World Order between Inter-State Law and the Law of Humanity: The Role of Civil Society Institutions,” in *Cosmopolitan Democracy: An Agenda for a New World Order*, eds. Daniele Archibugi and David Held (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995), 164-165, 169.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 170-171, 172.

income and the democratization of economic enterprises (so that workers may participate in a company's decision-making), which were indeed emphasized in our discussion of participatory democracy.⁶³

The cosmopolitan thinkers who emphasize the need for a global social democratization, rather than a global political democratization alone, point out the dangers in pursuing only a formal equality between nations within global political institutions. Held, for instance, stresses how we cannot assume that formal political equality could bracket the broader inequalities between nations. Commenting on the idea of bringing all nations into an international free market system, he contends that “while free trade is an admirable objective for progressives in principle, it cannot be pursued without attention to the poorest in the least well-off countries who are extremely vulnerable to the initial phasing in of external market integration (especially of capital market liberalization), and who have few resources, if any, to fall back on during times of economic transformation.”⁶⁴ He thus advocates that “All developed countries must adopt legally binding minimum levels of overseas development assistance,” and that those countries in particular devote 0.7 percent of their GNP to overseas aid.⁶⁵ As with participatory democracy, this represents a focus on the necessity of actually altering unequal social conditions in order to achieve democracy on (in this case) a global scale, as opposed to concentrating on a political debate that would be unavoidably impacted by those unequal conditions.

While I would argue that those cosmopolitan thinkers who place their attention on alterations in global political institutions, and give little if any attention to the need to reduce

⁶³ David Held, *Democracy and the Global Order: From the Modern State to Cosmopolitan Governance* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), 252-253.

⁶⁴ David Held, *Global Covenant: The Social Democratic Alternative to the Washington Consensus* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2004), 58.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 62.

global social inequality, should give greater consideration to this latter issue, I also maintain that the cosmopolitan model is still better suited than the deliberative model for integrating the need to reduce social inequality with its central features. This is because, like participatory democracy, cosmopolitan democracy does not define itself by a particular type of ideal interaction, or debate, among competing political viewpoints. As we have seen, the deliberative thinkers who insist on reducing social inequality cannot make this requirement without conceding that the central feature of their theory—deliberation—is not necessarily democratic at all under the social conditions we currently confront, and that we have to engage in practices that depart significantly from deliberative principles if we are to reach a stage where deliberation could be properly democratic. The main message of cosmopolitan theory is that there are certain political and social changes that are demanded by our current circumstances if we are to bring democracy further into existence, which allows the theory to conceive of why democracy must be associated with specific outcomes or policies that overcome entrenched social and political power, and why a “fair” debate alone over those policies may likely bear the imprint of the inequality that needs to be resolved.

It is important to clarify the relationship I am drawing between cosmopolitan democracy and participatory democracy. We have seen how participatory democracy focuses on moving democracy beyond the typical political institutions and into everyday social spheres, primarily by pointing out how inequitable power relations in the workplace, and social inequality in general, corrupt political debate and are also undemocratic in themselves. Cosmopolitan democracy takes this interlocking political and social democratization in a necessary global direction, emphasizing the interconnectedness of all peoples under contemporary circumstances, and calling for both the democratization of global political institutions and the overcoming of global

social inequality. Interestingly, Held has not thought an alliance between the two theories is possible, and he instead asserts that participatory thinkers such as Pateman and Macpherson have not been able to go beyond considering “the problem of political accountability as, above all, a national problem,” and that participatory thinkers simply hold representative institutions to be “insufficiently responsive to their citizens” and seek to replace those institutions with “various forms of direct democracy.”⁶⁶ But this is precisely the depiction of participatory democracy that I have shown to be erroneous, for it lackadaisically equates participatory theory with direct citizen involvement in policymaking, and overlooks the participatory theorists’ central focus on the democratization of society. Held’s critique of participatory democracy appears even stranger when we consider how he champions, as noted above, the enactment of measures like basic income and workplace democratization that are definitive of participatory theory. We can indeed see a natural fit between the two theories, once we recognize the way that they each maintain primary focus on the types of changes that are required if we are to further achieve democracy in the face of structural social inequality and exclusive political power.

Non-Deliberative Practices in Participatory and Cosmopolitan Democracy

In a recent argument that claims participatory democracy has not been effectively incorporated by deliberative democracy, Jeffrey Hilmer writes that the essential difference between the two theories is that deliberative democracy is defined by a particular “mode of participation” (i.e., engaging in deliberative reason-giving), while participatory democracy concentrates on democratizing “sectors of participation” (e.g., the workplace) that are not given sufficient attention by deliberative democrats.⁶⁷ On Hilmer’s account, deliberative theory takes the practice

⁶⁶ Held, *Democracy and the Global Order*, 16.

⁶⁷ Hilmer, “State of Participatory Democratic Theory,” 43-63.

of deliberation within policymaking bodies to be itself a manifestation of democracy, and this represents a fundamentally different focus from participatory theory, which does not provide any specific practice that could be said (in the same way) to be itself a manifestation of democracy. As I have shown, Hilmer is right to say that participatory democracy is distinct from deliberative democracy in emphasizing the democratization of “sectors of participation” such as the workplace; I also, again, would agree with Hilmer that there is value in participatory democracy’s insistence that we must seek to democratize the commonly undemocratic relationships of the workplace, rather than mainly seeking a change in the way policy debate takes place. However, Hilmer does not consider whether there might be “modes of participation” that are appropriate to participatory theory, but are less comfortably accommodated by deliberative theory. Because both participatory democracy and cosmopolitan democracy seek to achieve particular types of democratization that are demanded by our current circumstances, and do not place attention on the way such democratization should be put up for debate, it is worth considering whether this basic difference from deliberative theory can lead us to identify modes of participation that are consistent with the pursuit of that democratization, and that fundamentally differ from the deliberative mode of participation.

As we consider this question, let us refer back to Fung’s recent argument regarding deliberative democrats’ capacity to accommodate practices that differ from ideal, deliberative reason-giving. Fung concedes that unequal social conditions can effectively nullify the principles and practices espoused by deliberative theory, and he attempts to establish the types of “non-deliberative” action that deliberative democrats may engage in while they are confronted with such unequal conditions. For example, he references a 2001 occupation of Harvard University’s administrative offices by students and workers demanding a wage increase for the

workers, and describes how this non-deliberative form of participation was necessary to effect the wage increase, given the virtual impossibility of a fair deliberation with administrators who held vastly superior decision-making power and who felt little motivation to take the views of students and workers seriously.⁶⁸ Such an increased focus on non-deliberative action does indicate that deliberative theorists have taken social inequality more seriously, but this focus simultaneously diminishes the central category (i.e., deliberation) of their theory. Deliberative democrats' endorsement of non-deliberative practices under unequal conditions leaves them uncomfortably holding that deliberation must be both central to our democratic thought, and largely disregarded in coping with current conditions. If we agree that social inequality is perhaps our most fundamental democratic problem, if we agree that the conditions which effectively exclude vulnerable individuals from exercising power (as in Fung's example of the Harvard dispute over wages) are prevalent in current society, then this suggests that the non-deliberative practices necessary to address that inequality should be given a central role in democratic theory, and not discussed merely as an accessory to a focus on deliberation.

I argue that participatory democracy has a much greater capacity than deliberative democracy to accommodate these non-deliberative practices. Participatory democrats have defined their theory by the extension of democracy throughout society rather than by the achievement of proper deliberation, and so the theory does not have to contort itself to make room for the non-deliberative practices that aim directly at that type of democratization. Also, while Hilmer is correct that participatory theorists have not given much attention to the issue of what modes of participation they endorse, there has been some previous association of participatory democracy with the types of non-deliberative modes of participation discussed

⁶⁸ Fung, "Deliberation Before the Revolution," 409-411.

here: Jack Walker links participatory democracy with broadly based social movements,⁶⁹ while Peter Bachrach and Aryeh Botwinick address the importance of “class struggle” to participatory theory⁷⁰; Meta Mendel-Reyes gives a thorough account of the kinds of direct action employed by social movements during the 1960s and categorizes these as examples of participatory democracy, though she does not herself provide a clear theoretical account of participatory democracy or of how the actions she describes fit the theory.⁷¹ My argument thus does not require us to intrude upon participatory democracy’s basic features or to try to change the theory’s fundamental message. Rather, I suggest that if participatory democrats expand upon the rather minimal attention that has been given to their “modes of participation,” they could show how their theory possesses distinct advantages over deliberative theory on this very topic.

I also argue that cosmopolitan democracy possesses similar advantages here over deliberative democracy. We have seen how cosmopolitan democracy is principally defined by the types of changes in global social relations and political institutions that are demanded by our present unequal conditions. Cosmopolitan theorists have not given much attention to the types of practices that would be consistent with these democratic changes; although, like with participatory theory, there have been a couple inklings of what the particularly cosmopolitan-democratic modes of participation might be. Falk references the efforts of global social movements in stimulating action to protect the environment and in exposing how market forces have allowed banks and corporations to shield money from taxation.⁷² Held and Anthony McGrew together discuss social movements that have met the summits of major global

⁶⁹ Jack Walker, “A Critique of the Elitist Theory of Democracy,” *American Political Science Review* 60, no. 2 (1966): 289, 293, 294.

⁷⁰ Peter Bachrach and Aryeh Botwinick, *Power and Empowerment: A Radical Theory of Participatory Democracy* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992), 12-13, 31-32, 116, 139, 151-152, 153.

⁷¹ Meta Mendel-Reyes, *Reclaiming Democracy: The Sixties in Politics and Memory* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

⁷² Falk, “The World Order between Inter-State Law and the Law of Humanity,” 169, 176-177.

institutions such as the World Bank, the IMF, and the G8 with mass protests, and that have waged successful campaigns for such aims as the cancellation of third world debt.⁷³ These practices are not characterized by a proper debate in which all sides involved are accorded equal legitimacy, but by efforts and actions that specifically aim at benefiting those disadvantaged by global social inequality. Cosmopolitan democracy can indeed accommodate practices that take direct aim at social inequality without contradicting its own central tenets, which we have seen that deliberative democracy cannot do because of its central focus on a “fair” political debate. As with the participatory democrats, though, cosmopolitan democrats have not fleshed out the positive implications of this point about the modes of participation they can coherently endorse. If they did, the cosmopolitan thinkers would have an effective point to make regarding why, under unequal conditions, democratic theory must avoid commitment to an ideal form of political debate and must evolve the practices it endorses to suit the current reality.

Now, some deliberative democrats have implied that practices such as protests and strikes are actually examples of deliberative reason-giving.⁷⁴ This claim, however, requires jettisoning precisely what deliberative democrats hold to be valuable about the reason-giving process they describe. Reason-giving is meant to mitigate the intensity of moral disagreement, encourage competing interests to make proposals that are acceptable to their opponents, and produce policies that are justified to all involved. Unlike reason-giving, these modes of participation that cohere with participatory and cosmopolitan principles do not require that socially disadvantaged individuals argue only for policies that can be acceptable to the advantaged, and they do not presume that certain rules of discourse can assure equality between the advantaged and the

⁷³ David Held and Anthony McGrew, *Globalization/Anti-Globalization* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002), 64, 68-69.

⁷⁴ Gutmann and Thompson, for instance, claim that the actions of Martin Luther King, Jr. during the civil rights movement were examples of deliberative reason-giving; see *Why Deliberative Democracy?*, 50.

disadvantaged. These practices typically carry the connotation that social inequality is so pervasive that it cannot be merely bracketed—therefore, they aim more at allowing socially disadvantaged individuals to take direct action toward overcoming their unequal conditions, and to do so without having to satisfy the advantaged individuals at each step of the way. A workers’ strike, for example, is non-deliberative because it is usually based on the problem of the discourse between workers and management being intrinsically unfair and imbalanced. The workers withhold their labor in order to disrupt the normal workings of the enterprise, and in order to compel management to concede through that active disruption—and this cannot be considered “deliberative” behavior on the terms established by deliberative democracy. As Dryzek puts it, deliberative principles require that “any communication that involves coercion or the threat of coercion should be excluded” from political debate.⁷⁵ We can see here that practices which coerce the advantaged into conceding can have particularly democratic character under unequal social conditions, and the participatory and cosmopolitan theories can draw on this point in elevating themselves above deliberative democracy.

With this argument, I am not suggesting that it is impossible for deliberation to be a democratic practice under our current circumstances. Certainly, if the individuals within a particular forum (in a labor union, for example) are actually substantively equal, then deliberation can represent a fair method for making decisions. But when we have unequal social conditions, the actual fairness of deliberation cannot be generally assumed. Hence, what is *democratic* under these conditions must also (and perhaps even more so) refer to the actions and policies that directly aim at overcoming the inequality—actions and policies that have no necessary relationship to, and in fact can be distinctly antithetical to, the kind of deliberation

⁷⁵ Dryzek, *Deliberative Democracy and Beyond*, 68.

described by deliberative theorists. The point is thus not that we should give no attention at all to deliberation and to the quality of political debate, but that the centrality given to these topics in current democratic theory is not justified.

Conclusion

This paper has argued that democratic theorists should turn away from the currently dominant model of deliberative democracy, and toward the less prominent models of participatory and cosmopolitan democracy. The equation of democracy with a deliberative exchange of reasons over policy represents an abstraction from our unequal social conditions, and when certain deliberative democrats attempt to add into the theory a requirement that social and economic inequality be significantly diminished, they have to simultaneously concede that deliberation and democracy have only a very tenuous connection. Participatory democracy, by contrast, is defined by the democratization of “non-governmental” authority structures such as the workplace and by the reduction of social inequality in general. Cosmopolitan democracy, for its part, focuses on the need to overcome inequalities within already-existing global political institutions and global social relations. These theories’ emphasis on the changes that are necessary to democratize the undemocratic features of our current world, and their relative lack of attention on how competing political viewpoints should be brought into a proper debate, put them in a far better position than deliberative democracy to deal effectively with our unequal conditions. And further, I have shown how the participatory and cosmopolitan models possess additional advantages over deliberative democracy, by drawing out their capacity to support the types of “modes of participation” (e.g., strikes, marches protests) that aim directly at combating entrenched power inequities. For deliberative thinkers to endorse such practices, they have to acknowledge that democratization depends more on the achievement of outcomes that benefit the

socially disadvantaged—and thus on practices that might *coerce* the advantaged into making concessions—than it does on a fair debate between competing political positions.