



One world, many worlds?

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Editorial

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At least since the religious wars in the seventeenth century, political theorists have emphasized pluralism as a premise for political theorizing. In contemporary political theory it is widely agreed that a democratic system in one way or the other must be able to accommodate pluralism. At the same time, the discussion on pluralism has been lodged within a certain political unity in the form of the nation-state, setting up specific conditions for how to understand pluralism. Today a more global political reality is materializing. We are witnessing and experiencing overlapping and fuzzy boundaries of politics, which has opened the door for new ways to think about pluralism, both in terms of what it consists of and what its basic presuppositions are. The contributors to this special issue all seek to relate to or negotiate the question of plurality under these new conditions of politics.

David Beetham takes on the fundamental question of the universality and diversity of democracy, and the relationship between them. Concerning universality, he argues that two core principles of democracy can be justified: popular control of government, directly or indirectly, and the principle of political equality, i.e. that all adult members of the political community should be given equal consideration and have an equal say in political decision-making. Concerning diversity, Beetham argues that democracy is not only consistent with the diversity of values and beliefs, but also in many ways encourages it, for example, through promoting fundamental rights and freedoms and a vital public sphere. Moreover, the universal applicability of democracy opens for diversity concerning how democracies themselves come to be organized and institutionalized. Even in cases where some elements of democracy exacerbate societal conflict, such as majority rule, democracy is in Beetham's view our best bet for resolving them, as it is able to establish processes of inclusive dialogue, involving respect for difference and an understanding of the requirements of political equality. However, the co-existence between universality and diversity has its limits, and these limits are reached when one of the two core principles of democracy are violated.

In the second article, Aletta Norval takes issue with the other side of the democratic coin, that of exclusion. The question she raises is how a democracy intent on fostering pluralism should deal with the exclusion and deprivation of voice that accompanies modern liberal societies. Building on the work of Jacques Rancière and

Stanley Cavell, she distinguishes between the inclusion and recognition of voices associated with conventional pluralism and a new kind of pluralism that instead calls attention to the way dominant discourses make some voices unheard or unaccounted for. The intention is to show that a critical attention to domination and exclusion makes us more alert to the emergence of new political struggles and voices. As she writes, people are not democrats by virtue of institutions, laws or rights. They become democratic subjects through their own activity, that is, by exercising their capacities for questioning, affirming, negotiating and contesting the regimes, and micro-practices of governance that shape and limit their lives. Democratic theory must therefore foster an analytical engagement with the emergence and articulation of such new struggles and voices.

In political theory we are accustomed to thinking of patriotism and pluralism as two opposite figures of thought. This view is questioned in Antonino Palumbo's paper. As Palumbo notes, the rise of patriotic ideologies and sentiments is often due to the relational void that opens up in the wake of national governments pursuing cosmopolitan agendas. Instead of rejecting patriotism as an undesirable and irrational force, he invites us to distinguish between different modes of patriotic identification and the institutional settings that support them. Palumbo shows that apart from reactive or protective patriotism there is an ethical form of patriotism that is able to endorse social change without resorting to ethnic or hegemonic aspirations. What characterizes 'ethical patriotism' is that while it fosters identification and loyalty to one's own political community, it is nourished by an institutional setting of subsidiarity, functional representation and local participation, something which makes it particularly pertinent to a plural and multicultural polity like the European Union.

Today, the concept of public reason is used by liberal theory to address pluralism. In the last article, Simone Chambers investigates the early modern roots of contemporary ideas of public reason, through the works of Hobbes, Locke, and Kant. The aim is to show that the role of public reason underwent a qualitative shift as we moved into the modern era. Rather than representing a common form of reasoning, public reason is now best understood as a response to the lack of such a shared reason, according to Chambers. It arose as an answer to the question 'who shall judge?' When the Reformation detonates religious and moral conformity and creates an ever-expanding universe of beliefs and first principles, public reason becomes central for the justification of liberal institutions. In Chambers' view, a closer look at the early history of public reason reveals that, apart from being about identifying actual reasons that a public might share, public reason became concerned with the public having the capacity and the right to reason authoritatively.

The title of our special issue, 'One world, many worlds?', highlights deep philosophical and political theoretical questions, some of which are addressed in intriguing ways by the four contributing authors. Indeed, the authors also raise questions about the very topic under consideration, viz. the meaning of pluralism under new globalized conditions of politics. On the one hand, we might ask to what extent it is meaningful to speak about 'one world' in light of religious, political and

moral disagreement, and on the other, if the idea of ‘many worlds’ is even compatible with theorizing global conditions of politics. One of many merits of the four contributions to this special issue is precisely that they make us think more about these difficult, yet important questions.

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