

INTRODUCTION: FINNISH PERSPECTIVES ON DEMOCRATIC THEORY

Dag Anckar & Erkki Berndtson

There are many books about democratic theory. The reader may therefore wonder if there really is a need for yet another volume in this field. We believe there is, and we offer two reasons. Firstly, this book attempts to communicate to foreign scholars some of the scientific discussions about the problems of democracy currently being waged in Finland. Secondly, the book reflects the need of political science in Finland to participate in the ongoing discussion about the current change in political culture in Western societies.

This change involves problems of power, influence and decision-making, and recent discussion within political science has dealt with such problems of democracy as the need for a more responsive government, shortcomings of established political parties and the growth of corporatism. The papers in this volume consider these and related problem areas. They do not, however, form a logical whole. They are diverse and different in aims and strategies. We believe, however, that they in their diversity give a true picture of the scientific pluralism prevailing in Finnish political science, and we also believe that they give different incentives for thinking.

Democracy has, as a matter of fact, not been a rare object for research in Finland. There are book-length studies on democracy and total warfare and on democracy in the ancient republic of Athens, just to pick two examples from the 1950s. The former study, a doctoral dissertation by *Kullervo Killinen* (1956), is an analysis of the direction of war in a democracy and attempts to answer the question of whether the power of decision should be divided or concentrated in a collective body or a single person; the latter study, by *Tuttu Tarkiainen* (1959), examines the original meaning of the word »democracy» and the objects of the institutions of this governmental system. Indeed, the first English-language book, published by the Finnish Political Science Association in 1960, was titled *Democracy in Finland*,

although the book primarily dealt with the history of the Finnish political system and the structure of government and the party system. Further examples, from the late sixties, include book-length studies on societal prerequisites for democracy and on the decline of political ideologies. The former study, a doctoral dissertation by *Tatu Vanhanen* (1968), penetrates the relationship between the economic and social structure of society and the formation of party systems; the latter study, a doctoral dissertation by *Ralf Helenius* (1969), examines *Roberto Michels'* hypothesis of the law of transgression.

In the 1970s efforts to highlight theoretical problems of democracy by means of empirical analyses became even more common in the Finnish political science community. Again we shall mention just two examples, one a study of role conceptions in the Finnish Parliament, and the other a study of citizen attitudes towards democracy. The former study, a doctoral dissertation by *Matti Oksanen* (1972), investigates role perceptions and attitudes of Finnish M.P.'s and thus illustrates one important link between those who govern and those who are governed; the latter study, by *Pertti Pesonen* and *Risto Sänkiäho* (1979), analyses, by means of extensive surveys, the attachment of citizens to the political system of Finland. In the same decade the Finnish Social Science Council funded two large research projects dealing with problems of democracy. One was the so-called DETA-project (DETA comes from Democracy and Equality) which was led by *Ilkka Heiskanen* and *Tuomo Martikainen* and produced well over thirty studies over a four-year period. The other project was called RESPO (from responsiveness) and was directed by *Dag Anckar*. The RESPO-project published an extensive set of studies ranging from conceptual analyses of democracy and responsiveness to the actual workings of democracy in communal politics.

The present volume has grown out of some of these studies from the 1970s. It also reflects the change which came about in Finnish political science at that time. Political science in Finland was still in the early seventies heavily dominated by the behavioral mood, and empirical research on political man and political groups was dominant. At that time, however, underlying currents displaying an awakened interest in the role of the state and political institutions, in interactions between economy and politics, and in problems relating to welfare and societal needs became to gain ground. In short, manifestations of a post-behavioral attitude were discernible (cf. Berndtson 1973, Anckar 1977). Not only did this change imply a shift in research orientations towards new problems and problem areas. There was also in the picture a sort of spill-over effect, as the new orientations also influenced research on political man and political groups which took on new theoretical dimensions

and frameworks and started to reflect more profoundly various issues and aspects of democratic theory.

It is quite legitimate to argue that the new interest in democratic theory reflects a revival of political theory in general, which in turn reflects the structural crisis of the modern state and the crisis of established political methods. A considerable part of the empirical research on democracy has been a response to the tumultuous sixties and has tried to explain the sudden wave of unconventional political behaviour of students and various minorities. At the theoretical level problems of legitimacy have come to the fore, and this trend was strengthened by the economic uncertainties of the 1970s. The long stable growth of economy and politics which had characterized most Western societies after the Second World War was over. The quest for a value-free behavioral political science was also losing its credibility.

Today we are at a stage when the pressures for changes within the political systems have increased still more. Demands for arrangements for direct participation are growing and many West-European and other developed countries are witnessing various expressions of a search for «a new democracy». Such expressions extend from citizen's initiatives to appearances of local committees and similar institutions and to electoral successes for the «Greens» and other protest-colored political forces. But not only have ecological, feminist and peace movements strengthened their positions. The public in general has come to suspect to a greater extent than before the intentions and methods of politicians and established political parties which represent, or at least claim to represent, different and specific interests in society. Politicians who are able to rise above specific interests are successful, at the same time as support for politicians in general is declining.

A volume on democratic theory should of course provide an answer to the question of what democracy really is about. If we agree that we should strive for democracy, we surely need to know what we really have agreed on. However, beliefs about democracy abound. They may, according to one observer (May 1978, 3), be exemplified by declarations identifying democracy as or with an inorganic fraternity (Proudhon), despotic rule (Bonald), the idea of community life itself (Dewey), a petit-bourgeois counter-revolutionary ideology (Marx), mediocrity (J.S. Mill, Sorel), equality of fortunes and intellects (Tocqueville, Stephen), shared power (Carlyle), the absence of a State apparatus (Marx, Bakunin, Lenin), the political system in which society achieves consciousness of itself (Durkheim), the most political and complicated of systems (H. Mayo), institutionalized opposition (Lipset), the good society itself in operation (Lipset), maximal opportunities for self-development (Macpherson), and the worship of jackals by jackasses (Mencken).

This volume does not, to be sure, cover such a wild range of conceptions of democracy. Neither does it, on the other hand, prescribe or emphasize one conception only. The papers build upon different definitions of democracy which the authors have found useful for their purposes, and the papers offer, in consequence, often conflicting views of aspects of democracy. This is, in the view of the editors, no reason to entertain misgivings about the volume. Indeed, the volume is to be regarded as an expression of the belief that democracy cannot be achieved by making one conception the only right one, but rather by forming situations where different conceptions may confront and enrich each other.

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The volume is divided into three parts. Part I deals with DEFINITIONS OF DEMOCRACY and presents two articles. The first is by Dag Anckar, who identifies democracy with responsiveness and argues that power of initiative and innovation, creative ability, and other similar good activities and qualities are compatible with the notion of a responsive representative. The emphasis on creative ability also implies that the author takes a negative stand against the view that ignorant wishes should determine the outcome of politics. In short, responsiveness, manipulation and the need for information form essential problem-areas in this first article of the volume.

The second article is written by *Krister Ståhlberg* and *Voitto Helander*, who identify democracy with participation and influence. The authors draw on the classic liberal theory of democracy, and they are, in consequence, concerned with the way in which decisions are produced rather than with the content of decisions. Their perspective designates political participation and possibilities to exert influence on the political decision-making process as important conditions for the realization of democracy.

The second part of the book deals with DEMOCRACY AND PRACTICE. There are three articles in this section which try to evaluate problems of democracy from the perspective of the actual working of democracy. Dag Anckar discusses the ability of political authorities to meet wishes and demands directed towards the political system, and he thus extends the argument of his first article to a more concrete level. The article pays attention to actual examples of authority responsiveness, but it also reflects upon ways to measure policy responsiveness and thus touches upon problems of empirical research. The following two articles move at a more formal level. In the first article *Hannu Nurmi* discusses the meaning of preferences from the point of view of a rational theory of politics; in the second article he applies, in collaboration with *Eerik Lagerspetz*, some ideas of such a theory of politics to results of Finnish Parliamentary elections. The discussion attempts, among

other things, to cope with the much debated question of whether political elections should be carried out on the basis of majority systems or proportional systems.

Part Three of the volume, which is called LIMITS AND POSSIBILITIES OF DEMOCRACY, provides an extension of the themes of democracy. This section presents two articles. *Kari Palonen* discusses problems of oligarchy, dictatorship and democracy in the light of works by *Carl Schmitt*, *Roberto Michels* and *Jean-Paul Sartre*, while *Erkki Berndtson* tries to relate the limits and possibilities of democracy to recent political tendencies in the Western societies. Berndtson discusses problems of legitimacy and repression in modern states and possibilities to work for a more democratic society, linking this framework to the crisis of the party system, which he regards as a key point in established conceptions of democracy. The article can be read as an extension of Kari Palonen's article in so far as the issues raised by Palonen are regarded by Berndtson as threats to a true realization of democracy.

The editors of this volume do not want to claim that they have been able to or have even tried to compile a volume that would cover most aspects of research on democracy in Finland. However, with its shortcomings the book will hopefully give the foreign reader a glimpse of the debate concerning problems of democracy which is presently going on in Finnish political science.

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