What Does It Mean to Take Diversity Seriously? On Open-Mindedness as a Civic Virtue

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ABSTRACT

Taking diversity seriously should mean building political institutions that are open to diversity, rather than closed to it, and cultivating civic virtues that are welcoming of diversity, rather than hostile to it. Open-mindedness, in particular to the views of one's political opponents, would seem to be such a civic virtue. This essay argues that this disposition cannot be properly cultivated in an institutional context—electoral or party democracy—which thrives on and encourages the exact opposite virtue: partisanship. The essay gestures instead towards a non-electoral form of democracy that would structurally encourage open rather than closed-mindedness and thus fully harness the benefits of diversity.

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INTRODUCTION

Let us posit, at the outset, that diversity in political decision-making is desirable. And let us posit further that diversity is desirable for instrumental reasons, e.g., the epistemic benefits that derive from having a diversity of perspectives applied to a common problem, in addition to whatever intrinsic merits diversity may also have. This is a commonsensical premise and one that is now supported by a respectable amount of research and empirical evidence. If diversity—and specifically cognitive diversity (the kind I will focus on in this essay)—is thus

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seen as an uncontroversial good, what follows in terms of an "ethics" of diversity? As members—and more specifically as citizens—in a group, what dispositions and virtues should be cultivated to maximize the benefits associated with cognitive diversity in decision-making?

Presumably, the dispositions and virtues we would want to cultivate as individuals and citizens would include empathy,[1] tolerance, curiosity, patience, hermeneutic charity, as well as a healthy dose of epistemic humility with respect to one's own views. This essay, however, will focus on a related but distinct virtue: "open-mindedness."

Open-mindedness, as the term itself makes clear enough, is the property of having a mind that is open to, and thus receptive of, new and different ideas, views, and perspectives. An open mind is the opposite of a mind that imposes filters or even gates on the influx of other people's ideas and contributions. An open mind is, by definition, the opposite of a closed mind, but it is also the opposite of a mind with self-imposed blinders. It is not necessarily an unbiased mind, however, since our psychological hard-wiring makes such an ideal an impossibility. It is a mind, however that consciously strives to identify and overcome bias and prejudice in order to give every point of view a chance of being heard and fairly considered.

On this definition, open-mindedness is, at least in part, the opposite of the political and civic virtue known as partisanship, which itself was recently rehabilitated as essential to the functioning of our electoral democracies. Partisanship, unlike open-mindedness, exists as a deliberate closure of the set of options taken seriously and as an intentional, partly blind commitment to a set of principles for the sake of political efficacy.[2] It is of course logically possible to be both open-minded and partisan, as long as the distinction is between an epistemic disposition and a practical one. But given what we know of the limits of human psychology, this conjunction of dispositions seems improbable. Individuals will inevitably experience, as a form of cognitive dissonance, being entirely open-minded about the value of their political principles and yet, simultaneously, morally committed to defending them at any cost in a political fight. Indeed, partisans will presumably need to be more closed-minded, at least on a number of issues, than people with no party commitment—the aptly named "independents" who refuse party labels and identities or at least do not recognize themselves under existing ones.

This essay suggests that if obtaining the benefits of cognitive diversity requires that we cultivate open-mindedness as a mental and moral disposition, then there

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1. For a thoughtful defense of this particular virtue, see MICHAEL MORRELL, EMPATHY AND DEMOCRACY (2010).

2. *See* RUSSELL MUIRHEAD, THE PROMISE OF PARTY IN A POLARIZED AGE (2014); NANCY ROSENBLUM, ON THE SIDE OF ANGELS: AN APPRECIATION OF PARTIES AND PARTISANSHIP (2008); JONATHAN WHITE & LEA YPI, THE MEANING OF PARTISANSHIP (2016).

may be something wrong with our political system, which currently requires us to cultivate partisanship—a form of closed-mindedness—as a civic virtue.

Part I recapitulates why open-mindedness is a valuable disposition that we should seek to cultivate among citizens if we are serious about harnessing the epistemic benefits of cognitive diversity. Part II argues that this disposition cannot be properly cultivated in an institutional context—electoral or party democracy—which thrives on and encourages almost the exact opposite virtue, namely partisanship. Finally, Part III explores the view that electoral/party democracy may not be an optimal regime form and gestures instead towards a non-electoral form of democracy that would structurally encourage open rather than closed-mindedness and thus fully harness the benefits of diversity.

I. OPEN-MINDEDNESS AS THE MAIN DISPOSITION OF CITIZENS WHO TAKE SERIOUSLY THE VALUE OF DIVERSITY

The benefits of a cognitively diverse group for decision-making are now relatively well established. Under certain conditions, cognitive diversity turns out to be more crucial to the problem-solving abilities of a group than does the average competence of its individual members.[3] This surprising result turns on its head the past received wisdom that group competence is merely a function of individual competence, or that, in other words, the more we staff our decision-making group with "the best and brightest," the smarter the group will be. It turns out that such a strategy will often be less successful, specifically when the best and brightest are too homogeneous in their way of thinking, than a strategy that consists in simply aiming for a high enough level of individual competence but maximizing the cognitive diversity of the group along the relevant lines.[4] If the goal is to compose an all-purpose assembly of democratic representatives, for which there is ex ante uncertainty as to what the relevant diversity should be, and assuming that on average citizens are at least competent enough to address most political questions, a good strategy is to take a random sample of the larger population and form a statistically representative mini-public.[5]

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3. *See* Lu Hong & Scott E. Page, *Groups of Diverse Problem Solvers Can Outperform Groups of High-Ability Problem Solvers*, 101 PROCEEDINGS OF THE NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES 16,385 (2004) (first elaborating the diversity trumps ability theorem); *see also* SCOTT E. PAGE, THE DIFFERENCE: HOW THE POWER OF DIVERSITY CREATES BETTER GROUPS, FIRMS, SCHOOLS, AND SOCIETIES 163 (2007) (discussing the final and authoritative version).

4. For a discussion of the theorem and its application to political science (and the real world more generally), see critics such as Paul J. Quirk, *Making It Up on Volume: Are Larger Groups Really Smarter?* 26 CRITICAL REV. 129 (2014); Abigail Thompson, *Does Diversity Trump Ability?*, 61 NOTICES AM. MATHEMATICAL SOC'Y 1024 (2014); JASON BRENNAN, AGAINST DEMOCRACY 182 (2016). For the defenders, see Hélène Landemore, *Yes We Can (Make It Up On Volume): Reply to Critics*, 26 CRITICAL REV. 184 (2014); Scott E. Page, *Diversity Trumps Ability and the Proper Use of Mathematics*, 62 NOTICES AM. MATHEMATICAL SOC'Y 9 (2015); Daniel J. Singer, *Diversity, Not Randomness, Trumps Ability*, PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE (forthcoming 2018). Daniel Kuehn, *Diversity, Ability, and Democracy: A Note on Thompson's Challenge to Hong and Page*, 29 CRITICAL REV. 72 (2017).

5. HÉLÈNE LANDEMORE, DEMOCRATIC REASON: POLITICS, COLLECTIVE INTELLIGENCE, AND THE RULE OF THE MANY 108–115 (2013); Hélène Landemore, *Deliberation, Cognitive Diversity, and*

Working with a random group of sufficiently smart people rather than a relatively similar-thinking group of very bright people has several benefits, which can be summarized via the topographic metaphor commonly used in the literature on diversity[6]: it allows the group to explore more of a given epistemic landscape and increases its chances of reaching its highest peak. A view emanating from someone who thinks differently, in this context, jolts other people out of their cognitive comfort zone and helps them enlarge and refine their understanding of a question by opening up vistas they would not have contemplated otherwise. Deliberating with diverse-thinking individuals takes people places, metaphorically speaking, that they would not have been able to reach on their own. By contrast, a more homogeneous group of smarter people might well end up stuck on a familiar and high but ultimately suboptimal peak of the landscape.

This advantage of diverse groups is something I have previously illustrated, such as through the example of a group of citizens aiming to solve an issue of recurrent muggings around a bridge in downtown New Haven.[7] When the police—the experts in the story—try to solve the problem, they only resort to the cognitive tools and conceptual frameworks allowed by their expertise. They consider either catching the muggers or dissuading them by overt presence of a police car near the bridge, but they do not consider other, non-police related solutions. They only explore the space of solutions relative to their (relatively narrow) skill set. By contrast, a more diverse group of decision-makers, at least in the version of the story I tell, is able to "think outside the box" and comes to the conclusion that installing solar lamps on the bridge may act as a more efficacious deterrent (while also meeting pre-existing technical and budgetary constraints).[8] Notice that the diversity of the group of citizens in question comes from the fact that it includes, besides representatives of the police, concerned citizens, railroad engineers, and city officials and accountants.

Harnessing the benefits of cognitive diversity requires, in the story, keeping an open mind to the possibility that solutions may come from anyone and anywhere, including people that may not be able to articulate their views very clearly or compellingly and may thus come across as "less competent" than other people in the group. It means being ready to revisit the conceptual framework imposed, at the outset, on the problem. While a law enforcement approach may seem like the proper initial way to frame a crime issue, a reframing of the problem in terms of urban architecture turned out to be more appropriate. While police may not have been institutionally prepared to consider non-police related solutions, one would

Democratic Inclusiveness: An Epistemic Argument for the Random Selection of Representatives, 190 SYNTHESE 1209 (2012).

6. *See* GERALD GAUS, THE TYRANNY OF THE IDEAL: JUSTICE IN A DIVERSE SOCIETY (2016); LANDEMORE, *supra* note 5; SCOTT E. PAGE, THE DIFFERENCE: HOW THE POWER OF DIVERSITY CREATES BETTER GROUPS, FIRMS, SCHOOLS, AND SOCIETIES (2007); Michael Weisberg & Ryan Muldoon, *Epistemic Landscapes and the Division of Cognitive Labor*, 76 PHILOSOPHY SCI. 225 (2009).

7. *See* LANDEMORE, *supra* note 5.

8. LANDEMORE, *supra* note 5.

imagine and hope that they, as members of the deliberating group, were able to see the merits of a non-police-based approach.

How do we ensure that frames are not fixed forever, that solutions that may have been dismissed at the outset of a conversation can come to be reconsidered later? One necessary condition is the disposition of open-mindedness. This quality is, like common sense, one that most people would assume they possess. Yet it is easily hampered by a number of human propensities and circumstances. It cannot simply be assumed but needs to be actively encouraged, and deliberative processes must be designed to foster it.

The main obstacles to open-mindedness are the usual epistemic spoilers of deliberative processes: social conformism and the limited pool of information.[9] What may be behind both threats, or at least reinforce their power, is undoubtedly the emotional cost of disagreement, which leads to masking one's true preferences, information, and perspectives. The external difficulty of keeping an open mind is that some of the phenomenological manifestations of open-mindedness can be misconstrued by others as contrarianism or obstructionism (e.g. "you're not a team-player"). There is a cost that the open-minded person may have to bear in terms of the way she is being perceived by the rest of the group. As a result, many people will prefer going along with whatever the group decides and accelerate a process of group polarization whereby previously held beliefs only get reinforced in the deliberative process.

Conversely, the internal difficulty for someone who tries to remain open-minded is to have to entertain options seen as absurd or possibly distasteful. It means overcoming our natural inclination to motivated reasoning, having to possibly side, if only for a moment, with people we initially disagree with, and finally having to suffer the emotional and social costs of changing one's mind where the matter demands it. Observed examples of successful deliberative exchanges usually involve participants riding a complex and sometimes exhausting emotional roller-coaster.[10] Successful deliberation generally means transforming one's preferences ever so slightly and such transformation often takes an emotional toll— the toll our cognitive faculties seemingly impose on our emotions for the extra work asked of them.

Considering the difficulty of keeping an open mind, are our political institutions geared toward easing this difficulty? This is the question I ask in the next section.

II. WHY OPEN-MINDEDNESS IS HARD TO CULTIVATE IN AN ELECTORAL DEMOCRACY

Electoral democracies are democracies in which much of the public debate is structured as a competition between policy platforms backed by partisan justifications. Parties are essential intermediary bodies between individual citizens and

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9. *See* Cass R. Sunstein, *The Law of Group Polarization*, 10 J. POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY 175 (2002).
10. *See* MICHAEL MORRELL, EMPATHY AND DEMOCRACY: FEELING, THINKING, AND DELIBERATION (2010).

the institutions of the state, in that they aggregate views, perspectives, solutions, and information into a cognitively manageable number of bullet points, value statements, and other ideological shortcuts. To the extent that parties are necessary, so is the virtue of partisanship that sustains them.

Yet parties and partisanship come at an epistemic cost. Diana Mutz's empirical work on the relation between participation and deliberation strongly suggests that we cannot have it both ways: either people will be willing to engage with dissenting others and enjoy the epistemic benefits of exposure to diverse, or even conflicting, views, or they will be willing to vote, campaign for candidates, and generally be engaged as partisans in the political arena.[11] But they cannot be open-minded and politically engaged at the same time. This is so, she argues, because most people, when faced with even minimal disagreement in the political realm—what she calls "cross-cutting exposure"—recoil from engaging and prefer to retreat to the sphere of their like-minded peers and political friends.[12] In other words, Mutz finds that partisan political participation and the kind of open-mindedness I defended above for its valuable epistemic properties do not go together. To the extent that exposure to diversity and disagreement through political discourse threatens interpersonal harmony, people will tend to avoid entering into political discussion at all. They will apply the etiquette of the polite guest—let's not talk about politics—or they will seek the company of like-minded people.[13]

For some, this impossibility of reconciling deliberation and participation or open-mindedness and partisanship points to a rational trade-off. Recent literature on partisanship claims that partisanship is, in fact, an indispensable catalyst for political justification in large nations where policy platforms and supporting arguments need to reach a sufficient level of visibility.[14] Only parties permit this and as such they are essential to the realization of the ideal of "public reason" whereby laws are legitimate only to the extent that they are the product of an exchange of arguments among the citizenry.[15] As a consequence of this argument, commitment to a party and its set of values and policy platforms—partisanship—proves instrumental to the justification of public policies because only partisans have the energy, level of commitment, and passion required to bring certain arguments to the foreground of the public sphere.

By contrast, to the extent that open-mindedness is a disposition that inhibits partisanship, it cannot and should not be valued as a civic virtue, lest it lead to the crumbling of parties and leave citizens with no alternative ways to compare arguments and justifications. Open-minded people may make for great dinner guests, or philosophers, but they make for terrible political agents and indeed, one might

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11. *See* DIANA MUTZ, HEARING THE OTHER SIDE: DELIBERATIVE VERSUS PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY (2006).

12. *See id.*

13. *See* Hélène Landemore, *On Minimal Deliberation, Partisan Activism, and Teaching People How to Disagree*, 25 CRITICAL REV. 210 (providing detailed analysis of Mutz's argument).

14. *See* JONATHAN WHITE & LEA YPI, THE MEANING OF PARTISANSHIP (2016).

15. *See id.*

argue, citizens. They are impotent to act and carry forward a political program. To quote Jonathan White and Lea Ypi and on the possibility of a "no-party democracy":

> Arguably the probable outcome would be the justification of power in terms even more personalistic, conformist, and prone to manipulation. . . . [I]n the absence of partisan practices one would need to rest one's hopes on morally committed individuals or ad-hoc groups—neither of whom can offer the epistemic, motivational, and feasibility potential needed to promote and sustain political commitment. Under such conditions, political pathologies become even harder to avoid; the focus on strategy at the expense of justification is liable to become the norm. In short, *political justification in a no-party democracy is yet more difficult to sustain than in a democracy where citizens act together, aware of the potential pathologies of partisanship, yet still committed to the forms of reciprocal engagement it makes available.*[16]

For White and Ypi, parties and partisan practices thus offer epistemic advantages in terms of the justification of power that simply cannot be provided by individuals or ad hoc groups (by which they presumably mean temporary coalitions of individuals formed for the purpose of promoting certain views in the context of specific elections, but without the historic permanence and structure of classic parties). For all its problems and pathologies therefore, partisanship remains for them necessary to the legitimacy and functioning of our representative democracies, in a way that open-mindedness is not. In other words, if the choice is between open-mindedness and partisanship as a favored civic virtue, so much the worse for open-mindedness.

I am not convinced by White and Ypi's largely speculative claim that individuals or ad hoc groups could not in some fashion make up for the loss of parties and partisan practices, at least as we know them, in a no-party democracy. Classical Athens functioned perfectly well without parties, on the basis of direct popular assemblies and a number of randomly selected ones. More recently, something like an ad hoc group ("En Marche!", the movement founded by Emmanuel Macron) managed to offer a rather plausible justification for the claim to power of its leader in the last French presidential campaign, and successfully demonstrated "the epistemic, motivational, and feasibility potential needed to promote and sustain political commitment" in that the movement famously triumphed over all established parties.[17] I do not have more than this anecdotal evidence to question White and Ypi's claim, but it suggests that the viability of a no-party democracy should not be dismissed so quickly.

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16. *Id.* at 70–71 (emphasis added).

17. Of course, the movement founded by Emmanuel Macron has now de facto morphed into a party-like structure ("La République en Marche"). This might be, however, due to the larger party-based context in which it is forced to operate, rather than some internal necessity.

Despite these efforts by recent theorists to give a more elevated position to the idea and practice of "partisanship" as a catalyst for justification, open-mindedness, it seems to me, remains more likely to prove instrumental to public justification, in that it ensures both generation of better arguments, as collectively constructed by all the members of a diverse group, and a better reception of these arguments. By contrast, partisanship is a form of deliberate closed-mindedness that refuses to take seriously the possibility of the other side having a perspective or set of arguments to contribute to the debate.

Consequently, I suggest that we entertain a different solution to the dilemma: if the alternative is between an epistemic vice and an epistemic virtue, so much for the epistemic vice, even if it happens to prove functional to a particular political system. Maybe partisanship is the main virtue of citizens in electoral systems. If that is so, it might be an indictment of such a system. In other words, that partisanship proves more efficacious than open-mindedness in an electoral/party democracy context might not be enough to rescue it normatively. Maybe we should, instead, rethink the conception of democracy we live by so as to build one in which open-mindedness, rather than partisanship, proves instrumental to public justification.

III. What Would a Political System that Nurtures and Thrives on Open-Mindedness Look Like?

Party democracy was not inevitable, though it often seems like it. Indeed, as already stated, we know of at least one historical example of functional "no-party" democracy: Classical Athens. Fifth and fourth century Athens functioned along both direct and (I would argue) proto-representative lines. The "direct" institution was, arguably, the emblematic Assembly of the People, whose members met in the public place to vote on laws and decrees; the proto-representative (legislative) institutions were the Council of 500 and the nomothetai. The selection mechanism for the latter was a lottery among the willing.[18]

What is puzzling is why this original non-electoral model of democracy was not taken up again when democracy was reinvented in the 18th century in the West, especially given the concerns over "factions" held by theorists like Jean-Jacques Rousseau in France or the American Founding Fathers. If we go back to the debates among the Federalists and the Anti- Federalists in the United-States, we get a sense of what happened.

The Federalists—history's victors—favored the idea of a "republic" where individual competence and virtue of the leaders were central. They aimed to staff representative assemblies with people of talent and wisdom capable of enlarging and refining common people's views.[19] They privileged a vision of representation

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18. Josiah Ober, Mass and Elites in Ancient Athens: Rhetoric, Ideology, and the Power of the People (1997); Mogens Herman Hansen, The Athenian Democracy in the Age of Demosthene: Structure, Principles, and Ideology (1999).

19. The Federalist No. 10 (James Madison).

as a "filter" primarily seeking to maximize the average competence of the representatives while accepting the costs of reducing their group to a relatively homogeneous group of people (the "natural aristocracy" denounced by critics).

By contrast, the Anti-Federalists (Melancton Smith in particular, taking up ideas put forward by John Adams) favored an ideal regime closer to the direct democracy that they saw at the time successfully implemented in the Swiss confederacy, of comparable size, populousness, and wealth as the U.S. Short of directly democratic institutions, they envisaged as a second-best an epistemic ideal of representation as "mirror" or "miniature portrait of the people."[20] They argued that only people with at least a number of similar traits and lived-experience could properly speak on behalf of common people and, indeed, have the relevant political knowledge. Whether they realized it or not, their model privileged the reproduction on the small scale of the maximal cognitive diversity of the entire citizenry and was much less concerned with the competence of individual representatives.

Why did the Anti-Federalists, who anticipated some of the contemporary ideas about the factors of collective intelligence and the benefits of cognitive diversity, lose the battle of ideas in the 18th century? French historian Yves Sintomer gives us one possible explanation. For Sintomer, advocates of the mirror model of representation simply lacked the conceptual tools to support their otherwise correct intuition about the merits of a descriptively representative assembly.[21] In particular, the idea of a "random sample" was not available just yet (it would become available only in the late 19th century, with the rise of statistics as a science). Polling techniques, which are one practical way of implementing sortition-based selection, were also unavailable.[22] This is a plausible explanation for the defeat of mirror models of representation in the 18th century. One could nonetheless add that there were more hurdles in the path of the advocates of representation as mirror-image than merely epistemological and technological ones. One of them was the ideological dominance of elections as the marker and carrier of political legitimacy. As Manin describes it, elections in the 18th century "triumphed" over any other alternative selection method (including the obvious democratic alternative of lotteries) because of the theory of political legitimacy that was dominant at the time, which linked legitimacy to consent (since the 17th century social contract theory) and, specifically, consent at the ballot booth.[23] As a result, the Anti-Federalists could only imagine selecting representatives by election, which is not a method suited to produce a "mirror-image" of the nation. The Anti-Federalists'

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20. *See* JOHN ADAMS, THOUGHTS ON GOVERNMENT (1776), *reprinted in* 4 THE WORKS OF JOHN ADAMS 193 (Charles Francis Adams ed., Boston, Little, Brown & Co. 1856); Melancton Smith, Speech at the 1788 New York Convention, *reprinted in* 1 PHILIP B. KURLAND, THE FOUNDERS' CONSTITUTION Ch. 13 (Ralph Lerner & Philip B. Kurland eds. 1987).

21. YVES SINTOMER, FROM RADICAL TO DELIBERATIVE DEMOCRACY: RANDOM SELECTION IN POLITICS FROM ATHENS TO THE PRESENT (forthcoming 2018).

22. *Id.*

23. BERNARD MANIN, THE PRINCIPLES OF REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT 67–93 (1997).

solution to this problem was to plead for smaller constituencies and a larger number of representatives, hoping that these conditions would generate assemblies at least representative of the middle-class rather than just the "natural aristocracy" of the country. Of course this second-best solution, which also had other problems of its own, failed to convince. By contrast, the idea of representation as a filter and the practice of elections as selecting the more competent from among the citizenry were a perfect conceptual and ideological fit.[24]

The next historical step in the evolution of representative governments was to go from parliamentary democracy—where the legislative assembly is seen as a place of deliberation among individually superior minds—to party democracy, where the entire public sphere, including the formal one, becomes a competition between competing views of the common good and individual citizens or their representatives adjudicate between these views via voting. Representative government, from its early elitist beginnings to today's partisan version, corresponds to a dated understanding of what makes groups smart and the civic virtues one should cultivate in both leaders and citizens.

Today, however, we have the social-scientific tools and concepts to understand where the advocates of the filter-idea of representation went wrong and the advocates of the mirror-image went right. One way forward could thus be, instead of rationalizing away the electoral democracy we have inherited from the 18th century, to start imagining different institutions, which would aim to maximize cognitive diversity of the rulers and whose attendant civic virtue would be open-mindedness rather than partisanship.

What such an alternative would look like remains to be imagined. It seems to me that a generalized system of what I call "open mini-publics"—assemblies of a few hundred citizens selected at random and connected to crowdsourcing platforms ensuring constant influx of new ideas and deliberative circularity between formal and informal public spheres—could form the core of such a system.[25] We would presumably still need intermediary bodies of like-minded citizens mobilized around specific issues that would look like contemporary parties in at least some respects. But the problems of partisanship might be assuaged or entirely done away with if these intermediary bodies were not allowed to ossify into permanent historic platforms, if the members sent to power were selected by lot rather than elections, and if these same members were culturally encouraged and politically rewarded for the independence of mind rather than their devotion and blind adherence to the party line.

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24. Note that in both cases open-mindedness can be a virtue assumed of the representatives, as both the mirror and the filter visions of representative assemblies are compatible with a large degree of freedom on the part of representatives to make up their own mind during parliamentary debates.

25. HÉLÈNE LANDEMORE, OPEN DEMOCRACY: REINVENTING POPULAR RULE FOR THE 21ST CENTURY (August 2018) (unpublished manuscript under advance contract with Princeton University Press) (on file with author).

I do not have much more to say on the contours of such an alternative at this point, though I suspect that going back to Classical Athens and the way justificatory arguments were constructed in the public sphere even in the absence of parties might teach us a lot about the possibility of a non-partisan democracy that is nonetheless committed to public, and indeed, "democratic" reason.