EDITORIAL 2

COMPULSORY VOTING, COMPULSORY TALKING

Over the course of the last two decades, observers of modern democracies have diagnosed increasing social inequality in almost all Western democracies. One of the consequences of this inequality is that it apparently also translates into the realm of political will formation, resulting in a disproportionate fraction of the lower social strata not voting. Other forms of political participation have not been able to close this gap to date. On the contrary. New forms of political participation, such as citizens' forums, consensus conferences or public mediation, which are considered to be the classic instruments of frequently invoked civil society, have proven to teem with members of the academic middle classes, but enjoy less response on the part of less well-educated groups of society. In the longer term, this social gap in political participation may develop into a more serious problem for the acceptance of democratic decisions reached in this way.

The idea of compulsory voting has been developed against this background in various countries since the 1990s. In her article "Debating Compulsory Voting: Electoral Reform as a Conflict of Political Concepts," Anthoula Malkopoulou points out that even the name given this form of electoral law expresses a normative preference: The terms "compulsory voting," "mandatory voting" or "obligatory voting" reflect different assessments of the restrictions on freedom that they involve. The two German terms "Wahlpflicht" and "Wahlzwang" reveal these differences in a perhaps even more serious way.

Anthoula Malkopoulou elaborates that in the final analysis, the different reasons propounded for or against "compulsory voting" are based on fundamental differences in the individual authors' concepts of freedom and democracy. According to Malkopoulou, four main categories of normative arguments have developed in support of or against compulsory voting in recent years: (1) the connection between obligatory voting and strict political equality, (2) individual rights vs. civic duties, (3) collective rationality and democratic legitimacy and finally (4) effects on political outcomes.

One of the surprising findings of Malkopoulou's article is that neither the proponents nor the opponents of compulsory voting belong to homogeneous political camps; in fact, they come from different intellectual traditions. It will be interesting to witness whether the idea of compulsory voting, which is practiced in nearly 30 democracies around the globe today, will experience another renaissance. Malkopoulou herself does not make any recommendations for or against compulsory voting and also declines to take a clear position on its relevance for modern democracies in the future. In light of the fact that the two best-known European countries with compulsory voting – Greece and Belgium – have not made the most positive of impressions in recent years because of their particularly good elected governments, the chances of introducing compulsory voting in other EU countries are likely best considered slim. What is more, demanding a formalized obligation to cast the vote would face particular resistance from people in the formerly socialist countries, as precisely the right to withdraw from political life was part of their newly won freedom.

In contrast, Frank Ankersmit argues with dedication against this stance in "What if our representative democracies are elective aristocracies?" His article will surely trigger disputes, as his central thesis – that all modern democratic theorists basically agree that what we are used to calling "representative democracies" are in fact "elective aristocracies" – is itself highly controversial. In a certain sense, Ankersmit's strategy of argumentation is reminiscent of Carl Schmitt's in the German debates. Confronted with the problem of how to deal with historical and political concepts as diverse as "representation" and "democracy," Ankersmit opts for a strategy of conceptual purity and confrontation, just as Carl Schmitt did in his days: both authors elaborate the fundamental differences and incompatibilities between

the two concepts, desiring to force the reader to decide that one of the principles has priority over the other. Ankersmit prioritizes "representation," Schmitt preferred different priorities at various points during his long career. In addition, Carl Schmitt had broadened his strategy of confrontation to include other components of modern Western democracies like the rule of law ("Rechtsstaat") as well. The alternative strategy was championed in the German debates of the day by his adversary Ernst Fraenkel, who considered modern Western democracy a mixture of different concepts from different traditions that are to be, and can be, balanced wisely with one another. Ankersmit argues against this strategy of balancing by critically examining Thomas Paine's argument during the American Revolution and Nadia Urbinati's recent theory of representative democracy. According to Ankersmit, both make the mistake of abandoning the concept of sovereignty in their efforts to build a conceptual bridge between representation and democracy (another parallel to Schmitt, by the way).

But it would be wrong to turn Ankersmit into a liberal Schmittian. In referring to Abbé Emmanuel Sieyès and his proposal during the French Revolution to introduce elected "Tribuns," he even points a path for reconciling representation and democracy. A way of reform, however, whose realization today he considers so improbable that in the end, he argues for settling for the aristocratic character of modern political rule. According to Ankersmit, such an attitude even has its advantages, since it makes us more sensitive to the actual danger, namely that so-called modern representative democracies may degenerate from aristocracies to oligarchies. Ankersmit identifies a number of signs of this kind of development and argues against this background for focusing on the political impact of fair and free elections.

Whether and to what extent political elections in fact generate the anti-oligarchical effects Ankersmit accords them is the topic of Cornelia Ilie's article titled "The Gender Divide in Election Campaign Interviews: Questioning Barack Obama and Calling into Question Hillary Clinton." Ilie presents a close linguistic and pragmatic inspection of TV interviews with the two candidates for the pole position in the Democratic Party's camp for the US presidential campaign in 2008. Her contextualized text analysis leads the author to identify three mechanisms of biased questioning in interviews with Hillary

Clinton and her male adversary. According to her findings, there was a prevalence of a repetitive questioning style in the interviews with Clinton, a predilection for a manipulative use of leading questions and a striking discrepancy in their order when the same questions were addressed to the two candidates. For Ilie, the TV interviews were not fair to the female candidate at all; thus, she questions the fairness of the election.

Manuel Toscano takes up the relevance of the linguistic aspect for politics in a completely different way in his article "What kind of values do languages have? Means of communication and cultural heritage." What is that actual value of a language? To what degree should we regret and fight "language death" or even "language shift"? Do we have a moral obligation to conserve languages threatened by extinction or even to keep them alive? Toscano discusses two approaches to make the case for the value of a language. One approach is an instrumental one which defines the value of a language with reference to its communicative value. Such communicative value relies to a large extent on the network of those who speak a particular language. In this view, languages are "hypercollective goods" which benefit from the well-known "Matthew effect," and there is no convincing argument for conserving or caring for endangered or dead languages. The other approach is based on the view that there is a value intrinsic to every human language and to the diversity of languages in the world. Toscano calls our attention to the immense burden of proof taken on by such a strategy of argumentation.

Just as interesting are the political consequences that result from his deliberations. As a consequence of the position of intrinsic value, the heirs are not free to dispose of their cultural heritage, but are instead strongly encumbered by duties toward it. This argument of the dignity of languages per se has the potential to serve as a justification for a coercive policy toward speakers and non-speakers of a given language. Talking in a certain language may become compulsory to help the language to survive. Just like Anthoula Malkopoulou, Manuel Toscano also raises serious questions with respect to reasonable limits to individual rights and defensible collective duties.

His reasoning about the value of languages raises a second question, too. Concept analysis of political terms, which constitutes a major part of the published articles in our yearbook "Redescriptions," is a central part of modern political theory since political concepts

and political terms have different connotations in different languages and at different historical times. What would the future of political thought (and political theory) look like if communication around the world took place in just a single language?

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