

Democracy

Certain political concepts have had a long and controversial life as centers of political and philosophical disputation. Freedom, power, equality, justice, sovereignty and democracy are paramount among them. Democracy particularly has in recent years received rather effusive attention from social scientists, but an undeserved neglect from philosophers. Thus, one of the best things about Carl Cohen's serious and carefully argued philosophical analysis of democracy is that it betokens (hopefully) a renewal of interest on the part of philosophers in the condition of our political system.

Cohen's treatise sets itself the formidable task of providing a "theoretical account, coherent and reasonably complete, of what democracy is and how it works." It also is concerned to provide a defense of democracy--both retrospectively, in terms of the vindicatory evidence of its practice in America, and prospectively, as it can be justified from more abstract moral and philosophical grounds.

Cohen's working definition of democracy is a clear restatement of the *quod omnum tandit* principle that takes into account both the representative and the participatory aspects of democratic practice: "Democracy is that system of community government in which, by and large, the members of the community participate, or may participate, directly or indirectly, in the making of decisions which affect them all." Following an introductory section that assays to elaborate this somewhat over-qualified definition--but then, the qualification of qualifications is what philosophy is all about--Cohen moves into three long sections that are the analytic core of the book: the first, treating the pre-suppositions of democracy, looks at community and rationality as fundamental premises upon which any democracy, must be founded; the second focuses on the instruments of democracy, dealing with decision-making rules generally, and with problems of majoritarianism and systems of representation in particular; the third, confronting what Cohen calls the conditions of democracy, is perhaps the most interesting and provocative in the book. Dividing those conditions that, while not synonymous with democracy, "must be met if democracy is to emerge and maintain itself" into categories of the material, the constitutional, the intellectual, the psychological and the protective, Cohen sets out to clarify in calm philosophical analysis the many controversies that have surrounded democratic theory.

The tone throughout is rigorous and systematic, and the approach to issues is as all-encompassing as Cohen's vision can permit it to be. Indeed, it is so all-encompassing that it often seems unable to make those critical judgements of salience that permit the reader to know what is really important and what is merely of passing, academic interest. At times political relevance seems to be completely subordinated to philosophical tidiness, so that, for example, his discussion of the economics of democracy is scattered around in several different sections to suit the structure of the book rather than being confronted as a primary problem in its own right.

The pleasant philosophical tenor of the work also creates another difficulty for Cohen: a neglect of social science that makes the book seem more old-fashioned, more legal-institutional than it really is. REferences abound to Calhoun, Burke, Locke, Ernest Barker, Jefferson, Dewey, Madison and Michels, but the names of Dahl, Sartori, Lipset, Bachrach, Schumpeter or Friedrich, to mention only a view of a large colony of social scientists keenly interested in democratic theory, are nowhere to be found. This can have serious substantive consequences for Cohen's presentation of arguments--as when he raises the issue of decision-making as if Peter Bachrach's critique of neo-elitist democratic theory and his non-decisional formula that understands power not in terms of who legislates but who decides what is to be legislated simply did not exist. Or when he touches on the problem of intensity in majoritarian systems without discussing Robert Dahl's 'asymmetrical intensity' thesis that suggests that when an intensely interested minority is overruled by a relatively disinterested majority as a result of the procedural rules of numerical majoritarianism, the entire democratic system is likely to be put in jeopardy. Or when he examines the psychological and attitudinal conditions of democracy without citing that important body of evidence that has come out of the Authoritarian Personality studies of Adorno, Lipset, Lifton, and other social psychologists.

But this is perhaps inevitable in a philosophical study that, although it does occasionally invoke such concrete evidence as is afforded by Supreme Court decisions or the debates of the Constitutional Convention, is essentially concerned to provide an abstract, systematic view of democracy. And as a purely philosophical work there is little to fault in

Cohen's study. He is sensitive to critical issues, he is imbued with that generous and critical spirit that is prerequisite to democracy itself, and he is willing to take nothing on faith. Every shibboleth, every worn democratic myth is subjected to a good-willed but unsparring dissection. In fact, the only way in which Cohen's neglect of sociology and political science tends to injure his work is in his apparent blindness to the framework of political prejudices within which he necessarily works. Cohen seems inescapably to be a pluralist, and his notion of liberal-pluralist society color his entire analysis.

Thus, although he attempts to be sensitive to direct democracy, he quite overlooks in his discussion of systems of representation the vital difference between existential and voluntaristic representatives--the one being representative because of what he is, the other only by virtue of the fact that he has been chosen. Moreover, his distinction seems in turn to get muddled with the one between mandate representation and its opposites. Elsewhere, Cohen treats the referendum and the initiative in typical liberal-pluralist terms as *checks* on government, when from the perspective of direct, participatory democracy they are usually viewed as crucial instruments of participation in government (rather than as weapons against it). In the critical chapter on the psychological conditions of democracy, a picture of man emerges that is far more compatible with the liberal-pluralist-competitivesociety than with the direct democratic society: namely, man as fallible, experimental, critical, flexible, realistic, compromising, tolerant, objective and confident.

But these prejudices are clearly built into the very thought structures utilized by Cohen, and he himself does not pretend to be without them. If they limit his ultimate vision, they nevertheless give to his work a purpose and conviction that are indispensable to relevant philosophical analysis. Cohen's *Democracy* will certainly not be the last word on the subject, but it is a welcome addition to a literature vital to the future of America.

Benjamin R. Barber is Associate Professor of Political Science at Rutgers University.

Anodized Aluminum Works and Prints

An exhibition of "Anodized Aluminum Works and Prints", sponsored by the Art Department of the New Brunswick Museum for the Atlantic Provinces will be showing at the university Art Centre during the month of January.

The artist Georges Rackus is a Canadian painter and printmaker who has developed a personal method of painting based on an entirely new medium of anodized aluminum. From 1964-67 he experimented with anodized techniques, realizing the enormous potential of the medium aside from the usual commercial or industrial applications.

Rackus was primarily excited by the idea of expanding the usage of colour; to try colour applications relating to the various metal alloys in order to achieve maximum colour intensity, total control of colour development, and the possibility of working with a range of colour at the same time. As the work progressed, he required not only the finest, high

purity aluminum but the proper facilities to process his work. Unable to find this in Canada, Rackus was led to Brussels, Belgium, which had an anodizing plant that met his requirements. In 1967-68 he completed a series of works in this medium in Brussels which was represented in the Belgian Pavilion exhibit Art and Technology of the Man and His World Fair in Montreal.

These aluminum works have been more than successful, proving the strong receptive powers between the metal alloy and colour. Thus a new media for artists was created. The flexibility of the medium and the ability to control it allowed Rackus room to exploit the visual quality of aluminum to its fullest extent of depth, optical dimension and intensity. It also provided Rackus with a means to project an organic and structural imagery for his own conception and ideas, particularly of abstract forms in opposition to one another. The very strong emotive quality of

these works are indicative of the artist's own creative force and power. Colour is used for emotional depth in relation to the more analytical yet rhythmic application of linear construction, producing intensity and strength of organic feeling inherent in all the artist's work.

Rackus now spends his summers executing his works in Belgium and having them shipped back to Canada. He is presently a director of The Picture Loan Gallery, Toronto. He has been exhibited across North America, England and Europe and has had one man exhibitions in Paris, London, Barcelona, Ibiza, Brussels, Chicago, Brantford, Toronto, Montreal, Ottawa and Luxembourg.

The prints in this exhibition consist mainly of lithographs from the artists' series entitled "Earth and Sky".

The exhibition was organized by Robert Percival of the New Brunswick Museum to tour the Atlantic Provinces Art Circuit. It will be shown from January 8th to 28th in conjunction with an exhibition of oils by Three Artists of Barcelona at the UNB Art Centre in Memorial Hall on the campus.

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