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The Political Ideas Underpinning Political Distrust: Analysing Four Types of Anti-politics

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ABSTRACT

Anti-politics has emerged as an important concept for analysing the effects of distrust on liberal democratic politics. However, it is unclear why democrats should trust individuals who distrust politics to help them in renewing democracy. This article addresses this puzzle by defining four types of anti-politics: technocratic, elitist, populist and participatory. It then compares the political thought of four democratic thinkers associated with each type, to discern the extent to which they are 'productive' or 'unproductive' for representative democracy. The article argues that participatory and technocratic types of anti-politics, illustrated by the thought of Carole Pateman and, to a lesser extent, Friedrich Hayek, are productive for representative democracy because they prompt reflexivity in how representative institutions work. By contrast, populist and elitist types of anti-politics, illustrated by the thought of Ernesto Laclau and Joseph Schumpeter, are less productive. The article concludes that scholars need to carefully discern the logic underlying populist and technocratic 'solutions' to our contemporary democratic crisis because those solutions can themselves be advocated by 'false friends' who are unreflexive about what should be considered ideal sources of 'expert knowledge' or 'popular will'.

These normal allies of politics can occasionally forget themselves and act in a way that once made Wellington say of his troops: 'I don't know if they scare the enemy, but by God – they certainly scare me' (Bernard Crick, *In Defence of Politics*, p. 87)

Introduction

Anti-politics has become a popular concept for encompassing dynamics of distrust in representative democracy (Wood, 2016). Recent decades have seen a substantial rise in political distrust, with numerous scholars arguing this has led to a 'crisis' and existential challenges to representative democracy, in a manner that has prompted the use of this concept (for a review see Corbett, 2020). To what extent though, does distrust contribute

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to this crisis, and how should scholars interpret the necessary response? Political distrust can emanate from and drive support for divergent ideological positions, from Donald Trump to Bernie Sanders (Dyck, Pearson-Merkowitz, & Coates, 2018). The right level of *mistrust*, on the other hand, can be seen as legitimate where scepticism about political competence is warranted (Bertsou, 2019). Moreover, as studies of interpersonal trust show, distrust can serve as a stimulant for re-engaging and renewing trustful relationships, or for withdrawal and relationships stagnating (Ullmann-Margalit, 2004, p. 74). In short, while most agree there is a 'crisis' of anti-politics, understanding the reasons for political distrust, and evaluating proposed solutions to it, diverge significantly. This article addresses two questions:

- Which theories of democracy that distrust mediated forms of representation, prompt the reflexive use of unmediated forms of representation?
- Which theories of democracy that distrust mediated forms of representation do not encourage the reflexive use of unmediated forms of representation?

Rather than intervene in already extensive debates about how to revitalize democracy (see Dryzek et al., 2019) this article attempts to improve how we specify the problem. By comparing specific ideas in western liberal democratic thought about *representation* that express *distrust* towards the mediated way western liberal democracies practice representation, and propose alternative ways in which public preferences are best represented through *unmediated* representation. In doing so, it aims to provide a roadmap for scholars to assess whether those who profess distrust in representative democracy prompt productive, critical reflection on how to improve the way representative institutions work, or undermine them yet further.

To achieve the above aim, I map four belief systems from western democratic thought that underpin, in important respects, four alternative groups of attitudes and preferences for *unmediated* democratic representation, encapsulated by the anti-politics concept. First, I argue that *mediated representation* is a key element of the belief system underpinning representative democratic politics, and a key object of critique for challenger belief systems, notably populism and technocracy (Caramani, 2017). Second, I develop a definition of anti-politics building on existing literature on technocracy and populism as types of anti-politics (Bertsou & Caramani, 2020; Bickerton & Accetti, 2017; Clarke, Jennings, Moss, & Stoker, 2018; König & Siewert, 2020). Third, I propose that the extent to which they can be 'trusted' is the extent to which they encourage *reflexivity*, that is, open and ongoing contestation. Fourth, I elaborate this definition into a map of four types of anti-politics: *technocratic, elitist, populist and participatory anti-politics*. I analyse how each type conceptualises democratic representation, and how this informs distrust towards representative democracy within that stream of thought by comparing four political thinkers: Joseph Schumpeter (elitist) and Friedrich Hayek (technocratic), and Ernesto Laclau (populist) and Carole Pateman (participatory). These thinkers are chosen because aspects of their thought illustrate arguments associated with (although not entirely encompassing) ideas and attitudes in each type of anti-politics, which link preferences for a particular kind of *unmediated representation* to an explicitly stated *distrust* in mediated representation based either on 'reason' or 'will' (Caramani, 2017). I argue that *technocratic and participatory types of anti-politics*, characterised by Hayek's

and Pateman's thought, prompt reflexive engagement with the variety of sources of 'expert reason', and the diverse sources of popular 'will'. Fifth, I conclude by arguing that the extent to which we can trust those who distrust politics, relies on the extent to which they reflexively acknowledge the plurality and contestability of expert knowledge and popular will.

Mediated Representation as a Core Value of Representative Democracy

Liberal representative democracy has been viewed as increasingly 'under threat' from growing distrust in politics and government, technocratic governance arrangements, and populist politics of the radical right and left. However, notwithstanding explicit insurrections against democratic government, such as the attempted violent insurrection instigated by supporters of Donald Trump at the United States Capitol Building during the electoral college vote count on 6 January 2021, the drivers of democratic 'backsliding' have been conceptualized as more subtle. Certain key elements have been viewed as under 'critique', not necessarily outright threat (Caramani, 2017). This section posits the centrality of a particular concept in representative liberal democratic politics that has been subject to sustained critique: *mediated representation*.

In *The Principles of Representative Government*, Bernard Manin (1997) pinpoints a crucial aspect of representative democracy. 'From the second half of the twentieth century', Manin (1997, p. 194) argued, 'political parties organizing the expression of the electorate came to be viewed as a constitutive element of representative government'. Political parties channel a relatively unified set of (predominantly class-based) identities into relatively solidified policy platforms that had a claim to *mediate* those identities into a coherent singular 'party' will. Concepts like 'party democracy' or 'party government' gave expression to this type of representation. They both, critically for our purposes, rely on the idea of *mediation* as a central value of representative democracy. Mediated representation, or what Mansbridge (2003) calls 'promissory representation', essentially involves a principal-agent relationship where politicians are 'delegated' power by the public, who monitor and then hold those agents responsible at elections. This relationship is *mediated* in four senses: (1) 'the source of legitimate power is separated from those who exercise that power'; (2) 'electoral representation identifies a space within which the sovereignty of the people is identified with state power'; (3) 'electoral mechanisms ensure some kind of responsiveness to the people', and (4) 'the universal franchise endows electoral representation with an important element of political equality' (Urbinati & Warren, 2008, p. 389). Mediation, at heart, is the process through which politicians, through their parties, connect with their sources of legitimacy (the sovereign electorate) by mobilising them around a party platform, and negotiate within government to be responsive to the electorate's wishes. Through engaging with the system of parties and elections, citizens exercise their rights to political equality.

Representative democracy came to be defined in the twentieth century by a particular form of representation – mediated representation – in which political parties played not only a functional role in providing stable and consistent forms of government, the idea of mediation through parties and politicians also plays a critical *normative* role. Normative, in the sense that political parties, politicians and the associated institutions and activities

that sustain them – active civic engagement, campaigning and activism with and on behalf of parties and those they represent, as well as party political bargaining and nego-tiation within legislatures – are *desirable* because they ensure that mediation works effec-tively. This is the very 'stuff' of politics that scholars have claimed is under threat by 'anti-politics'. It is the variety of 'politics' that Bernard Crick (1962) famously made the case for in his *In Defence of Politics*. As we will see below, anti-politics refers to political belief systems that reject this definition and practice of 'politics'.

Defining Anti-politics

This article defines anti-politics as *coherent sets of political attitudes and ideas (political belief systems) containing preferences for unmediated mechanisms of democratic represen-tation, informed by distrust in mediated democratic representation*. This definition helps to begin disentangling which types of anti-politics may be beneficial to representative democracy, and which may be more problematic, due to their underlying argumentative logic. In this sense, it furthers work on 'anti-political' logics and ideas recently developed by Caramani (2017), Bickerton and Accetti (2021), Guasti and Bustikova (2020), and others. These authors highlight the centrality of 'technocracy' and 'populism', and com-binations of the two, as critical 'challenger' logics to traditional ideologies of 'party gov-ernment'. These 'challengers' propose to represent political preferences in an *unmediated* way, in place of mediated representation. However, as scholars in this literature suggest, the 'challenge' they pose is ambiguous and nuanced. This section provides a definition of these challengers *as political belief systems that can be characterized in terms of anti-poli-tics* so as to dissect the extent to which they prompt productive or unproductive demo-cratic tendencies.

Unpacking this definition, the concept of anti-politics refers, at base, to a 'political belief system'. Political belief systems are relatively coherent sets of ideas and attitudes that are coherent in that they 'hang' together in providing a 'thin' (that is, partial) logical justification for particular ways of configuring power relationships within demo-cratic institutions. A pivotal point to understand is that these belief systems are **not non-political** (Wood, 2016). They are not neutral or noncommittal about how democratic politics ought to function. Moreover, they are also *not explicitly anti-democratic or non-democratic*. Rather, *they propose alternative ways in which democratic representation can and should function on the basis of a lack of confidence that mediated 'party' democ-racy will achieve its core aims*. They are hence *anti-politics* in the very specific sense of conceptualising mediated representation in a normatively 'negative' way, and proposing 'unmediated' alternatives.

This 'lack of confidence' – or *distrust* – is the second key part of this article's definition. Individuals lack confidence in an institution or individual when they believe the outputs of the institution or individual (that is, what they do in fact achieve as real-world actors) do not, or cannot, match the expectations those institutions foster about their normative goals and aims; as Bertsou (2019) defines political distrust, 'A (does not) trust B to do C'. Such distrust is fostered by institutions' proclamations about their desired normative goals, but is also influenced by the *normative expectations* individuals themselves have about what those institutions should aim to achieve. In our case, distrust in mediated rep-resentation is fostered by conflicting normative ideals about what the aims and goals of

Table 1. Anti-politics as political belief systems: sources of distrust and mechanisms for unmediated representation.

| | Source of distrust in mediated representation | |
Mechanism for unmediated representation	'Rational speculation'	'Will of the people'
Centralised	Technocracy I	Populism I
Distributed	Technocracy II	Populism II

Source: constructed by author.

democracy should be. Table 1 divides these 'sources of distrust in mediated representation' into two aspects: 'rational speculation' and 'will of the people' (Caramani, 2017).

First, 'rational speculation' refers to the normative expectation that 'the general interest' can be gleaned from combining different forms of evidence to generate expertise, which in turn can inform fair decision-making processes to achieve valued goods (fairness, justice, liberty and so on). This normative preference has its roots in theories of democracy that set up 'epistemic' criteria for the success of democratic institutions and is essentially technocratic in nature (Bhatia, 2018). Epistemic democracy claims that 'the best decision method is one that is both procedurally fair and is epistemically valuable in approximating a procedure-independent standard' (Mackie, 2009, p. 141). In general, representative democratic institutions are viewed as preferable for achieving these standards by theories of democracy that place epistemic criteria at their heart. However, as Schwartzberg (2015, p. 199) notes, epistemic democratic arguments 'may have special appeal to those who believe that the justification of democracy lies in its protection of a set of core values' *but* '*who are anxious* about the extent to which ordinary citizens and their representatives *will adequately protect them*' (emphasis added). This anxiety exists in tension with, and can act as a source of distrust in, mediated representative democracy. From an epistemic perspective, it has been argued that mechanisms of mediated representation – *accountability* mechanisms of elections most prominently – do not incentivise good decision making. On the issue of tackling the climate crisis, scholars have argued that elections are insufficient as mechanisms for ensuring credible long term carbon emissions reduction strategies, essentially because politicians are forced to make short term electoral compromises to win electoral competition, and cannot be expected to have the sophisticated forms of knowledge required to adequately address the problem (Jeffrey, 2018).

By contrast to the rational speculation critique, the 'will of the people' refers to the normative ideal that democratic decisions must reflect a unified and homogenous popular demand, shorn of nuance or respect for diversity (Caramani, 2017). This normative criterion is, of course, most common in the ideology of populism. Populism is defined as

> an ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, 'the pure people' versus 'the corrupt elite', and which argues that politics should be an expression of the volonté générale (general will) of the people. (Mudde, 2004, p. 543)

Populists are explicitly distrustful of elites they accuse of being corrupted by the material rewards of office, which allegedly put them in opposition to the interests of 'the people'. This sets up populism to be explicitly distrustful of mediated representation, because, for populists, the people cannot ever entrust its morally pure singular will to the corrupted

whims of elected elites. However, as we will see below, the 'will of the people' is a contested notion, and those who propose alternative mechanisms of representation based on an improved expression of the 'popular will' do not necessarily agree that the 'will of the people' is as homogenous as populists do.

The third key aspect of my definition is the mechanism of 'unmediated' representation proposed by these belief systems, as alternatives to parties and politicians. Here, it is crucial to understand that mediated representation relies on a fine balance of power between the 'public' and politicians. The public are assumed to hold ultimate power through the mechanism of elections, but power must be held and exercised by those who are best able to represent, or aggregate, their interests. The 'principal-agent' relationship strikes a fine balance, therefore, between centralisation and distribution of power. Politicians and parties are entrusted with a certain amount of power to make public policy, while the wider public sphere exercises an oversight and accountability function to hold the powerful responsible for policy outcomes.

Technocratic and populist alternatives propose to redistribute power in this relationship via types of unmediated representation. However, it is ambiguous within these belief systems how such unmediated representation should work. Both technocratic and populist ideologies propose either to *centralise* or *distribute* decision making powers. Centralised forms of unmediated representation include investment of power in a single leader or party, who is viewed as being able to interpret and enact policies that are preferable to the public. These forms of unmediated representation situate the state as a critical seat of power, and seek to more directly represent a unified political force to embody the public good at the heart of the state. This can either be on the basis of improving expert-led reasoning or furthering the 'will of the people'. As scholars of 'techno-populism' have shown, both populist and technocratic parties have sought to centralise power within a single leader – for example, Mario Monti, the temporarily appointed Italian technocrat leader in 2011–2013, or Victor Orbán, the radical right-wing populist Hungarian leader.

By contrast, distributed forms of unmediated representation propose to disburse decision making power away from politicians, towards the wider public, in the form of communities, social organisations and businesses in the wider economy. Distributed forms of unmediated representation do not necessarily 'decentralise' power altogether. Rather, they 'distibute' it away from the state, looking for sources outside the state, in the wider public and private spheres, to 'authentically' represent public preferences. Again, both technocratic and populist alternatives do this. Populism can be seen in a positive light for representative democracy, as a 'corrective' to liberal democracy's tendency towards elitism (Kaltwasser, 2012). Populism has been found empirically to encourage electoral turnout and equality of participation, although this is mediated by 'host' ideology (Huber & Ruth, 2017). Technocratic arguments have been made for distributing policy decisions to quasi-autonomous non-governmental agencies, independent academic and scientific committees and expert bodies, which operate at arm's length from the state (Wood, 2021).

In Table 1, this ambiguity is shown in each cell by technocracy I and II, and populism I and II. While technocracy I and populism I advocate *centralized* mechanisms of unmediated representation on the basis of improving rational speculation and representing the 'will of the people', technocracy II and populism II both advocate *distributing* power away from the state, adopting different forms of unmediated representation, either in the wider

economy, or in local communities. Table 1 thus makes clear what is at stake when we consider unmediated types of representation as alternatives to mediated representation, and the basis on which these are advocated.

The Central Importance of Reflexivity

While mediated representation is a central normative feature of representative democracy, *reflexivity* is a crucial factor that makes mediation work. Without the possibility of being reflexive, democracy is but the imposition of a singular outcome on society. In short, reflexivity – specifically defined as open and ongoing contestation – is a vital benchmark against which to evaluate how 'productive' or 'unproductive' anti-politics is for representative democracy. This article compares how productive or unproductive anti-politics is for representative democracy using this criterion.

In *The Priority of Democracy*, Knight and Johnson argue that reflexivity is a core feature of democratic politics. 'Political argument', they suggest, 'requires relevant parties to assert, defend, and revise their own views and to entertain, challenge, or accept those of others' (2014, p.135). Democratic politics of a distinctly representative variety requires 'ongoing disagreement and conflict', in which 'arguments are exchanged under established, fair conditions'. Reflexivity is a compliment to mediation, because the process of mediation involves such argumentation, challenge and acceptance. It 'structures disagreement', ensuring that political debate does not become too heated, but nor is it unnecessarily stifled. Reflexivity enables the processing and sorting of competing political ideas in a way that respects the rights of the 'losers' of a democratic debate to contest the outcome in future, as democracy 'fosters still further disagreement' (Knight and Johnson, 2014, p.136).

König and Siewert define reflexivity specifically as 'open and ongoing contestability' (2020, p. 4). Open and ongoing contestability 'keeps up the future prospect to use one's political freedom and ensures the absence of enduring domination by any political view'. Reflexivity is important because 'citizens are enabled to effectively participate within the existing institutional setting in ways that allow them to change existing policies, laws and institutions, without however eradicating the possibility of this reflexive process itself' (König & Siewert, 2020, p. 4). This connects with the 'mediated' element of representative democracy because, in order to function properly, the party system must be informed by a vibrant civil society that continually contests political issues. It enables representative democracy to find a 'middle ground' of pluralistic respect for multiple legitimate views, and a balance between 'responsiveness' to the popular will, and 'responsibility' of political representatives. König and Siewert argue that such ongoing contestability is made more problematic by technocratic and populist challenges, because they 'deform' democratic debate by unreasonably prioritising either expert knowledge or popular will.

This article takes reflexivity as a central tenet of representative democracy, which supports mediated representation. Mediation is enabled by reflexivity, because ongoing contestation and discussion of alternative policies and solutions to societal problems is the very 'stuff' of mediated representative politics. It 'greases the wheels' of representation and 'reproduces' representative democracy by stimulating how people (citizens, politicians, activists) engage with politics (ongoing political debate, negotiation and contestation).

Four Types of Anti-politics

To show how technocratic and populist forms of anti-politics contribute to or mitigate against reflexivity, this article proposes to distinguish populist and technocratic belief systems from two further, distinct, belief systems that emerge from similar arguments about the importance of 'reasoned speculation' or the 'will of the people': these are labelled 'elitist' and 'participatory' anti-politics. Table 2 hence maps *four types of anti-politics*. It first summarises the model of representation they support (how 'unmediated' representation *should* work), locus of representation in this model (*where and how* representation happens in the model), and the basis on which they distrust mediated representation (*assumptions* about mediated representation). The primary move here is to separate out technocratic and populist types of anti-politics into those that support alternatives based on 'reason' or 'will', but based on a different interpretation of what it means to prioritise 'reason' and 'will'.

Below, I disaggregate these type of anti-politics by comparing the archetypal thought of four political theorists: Joseph Schumpeter, Friedrich Hayek, Ernesto Laclau and Carole Pateman. I choose each theorist as exemplary of each belief system in Table 2. I chose these theorists not because they perfectly exemplify each type, nor because I share their normative or partisan commitments, but because they make specific analytical connections between unmediated representation and justifications for distrust in mediated representation. Other scholars have chosen other theorists for each type, and I do not claim these scholars are uniquely representative of each. Rather, they provide for useful comparative analysis to identify how specific belief systems ought to be judged as productive or unproductive by progressive scholars interested in improving representative democracy.

Schumpeter and Hayek on 'Enlightened Rule' and 'Expert Rule'

Technocracy is an idea of representation advocating the overt depoliticization of democratic decision making through delegation of political issues to a range of quasi-public and private bodies (Wood, 2021; Bertsou & Caramani, 2020). It advocates the unmediated representation of policy options by experts in the policy making process.

Table 2. Types of anti-politics, their locus and model of representation, and basis of distrust in mediated representation.

Type of anti-politics	Locus of representation	Representative model	Basis of distrust in mediated representation
Technocratic	Diffused in expert groups in society ('expert rule')	Self-organising spheres of economy/society self-govern based on their expertise	Politicians biased by electoral cycle, leading to 'slippery slope' statism
Populist	Direct democratic mechanisms ('will of the people')	Direct representation of 'the will of the people' through referendums/single party	Politicians a corrupt 'elite' that must be overthrown through party representing 'the people'
Elitist	Charismatic leader appealing to a rational electorate ('enlightened rule')	Charismatic leader is judged by (otherwise) passive electorate	Politicians have privileged skillset and the public lack skills for engaging political issues
Participatory	Participatory initiatives across Society ('popular will')	Individuals participate actively in wide variety of workplace politics	Political efficacy must come from bottom up

However, while a preference for expertise has been well documented in the existing literature, little has been done to tease out the extent to which technocrats propose centralised or distributed forms of unmediated representation as a replacement for mediated representation. Such questions have important consequences for the reflexive or unreflexive potential of technocracy. This section teases apart these differences by comparing two theorists: Joseph Schumpeter and Friedrich Hayek. While Schumpeter prefers a centralised form of 'technocratic' representation, led by the enlightened wisdom of charismatic politicians, Hayek advocates self-organising systems of experts in the wider economy. I argue that these interpretations of expertise lead us to distinguish an 'elitist' Schumpeterian anti-politics based on unreflexive deference, from a 'technocratic' Hayekian anti-politics based on recognising distributed forms of expert knowledge.

Schumpeter's Elitist anti-politics

Mediated representation requires public engagement with political parties and the transmission and aggregation of political ideas and preferences through this medium (Caramani, 2017). It relies on diverse entry points between civil society deliberation and formal institutional spheres. 'Elitist' anti-politics rejects this notion of representation as over-burdensome, and potentially dangerous, and is represented here by Joseph Schumpeter's idea of the heroic, careerist political leader. Elite politicians are viewed as the sole source of enlightened rule. In *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, Schumpeter proposed to redefine 'democracy', referring only to the barest bones of representation through elections. He first defines the 'classical' ideal of representation as a 'democratic method':

> The democratic method is that institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions which realizes the common good by making the people itself decide issues through the election of individuals who are to assemble to carry out its will. (Schumpeter, 1976/2003, p. 250)

Schumpeter critiques this conception by arguing that there is 'no such thing' as the 'common good' because 'to different groups and individuals the common good is bound to mean different things' (Schumpeter, 1976/2003, p. 251). More generally, however, Schumpeter is deeply sceptical about the capacity of individuals to undertake the tasks of representative politics:

> The typical citizen drops down to a lower level of mental performance as soon as he enters the political field. He argues and analyses in a way which he would readily recognize as infantile within the sphere of his real interests. (1976/2003, p. 262)

On this basis, Schumpeter argues not only that participation in politics is counter-productive to determining the 'common good', but that it is counter-productive because most citizens cannot be expected to engage in the complex and multifaceted thinking democratic politics requires. The danger is, for Schumpeter, that 'irrational prejudice and impulse' would win out over political judgement, with the result that 'at critical junctures, this may prove fatal to his nation' (1976/2003, p. 262).

In response to this deeply distrustful view of democratic life, Schumpeter posits the need for a constrained definition: 'the democratic method is that institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people's vote' (1976/2003, p. 269).

Here democratic representation is, as Schumpeter is adamant to insist, 'a career' for political leaders, who are elected to serve on a periodic basis. This is necessarily so, because, as Schumpeter argues, maintaining democratic representation is such a monumental effort of human will, that it requires almost absolute passivity from citizens, *who do not mediate their views to their representatives*. He posits two conditions in particular: quality electoral candidates and a constrained sphere of decision making.

First, those who engage in politics, Schumpeter argues, must 'be of sufficiently high quality', by which he means political leaders of the highest quality. To enable this, Schumpeter suggest the need for 'a social stratum … that takes to politics as a matter of course' (1976/2003, p. 258). Schumpeter refers, in as many words, to a landed, property owning class that has the economic backing and social standing to undertake the momentous task of political leadership, which, for him, is constitutive of democratic representation. Second, Schumpeter is not only sceptical about who can lead in a democracy, he is also distrustful of extending democratic representation over a wide range of potential economic issues. Schumpeter's discussion on this point is somewhat hazy, including a short argument in favour of expert agencies. However, he does note with clarity that 'no responsible person can view with equanimity the consequences of extending the democratic method, that is to say the sphere of 'politics', to all economic affairs' (1976/2003, p. 266).

Rather than extending the realm of political deliberation beyond the state, or viewing multiple groups as being able to exercise democratic agency, Schumpeter proposed viewing representation in an essentially consumerist way. Since individuals can make rational decisions within their own household expenditure, they may only be able to do so to a limited extent in deciding who to vote for in an election to high office, relying largely on consumer instincts for the candidate with the 'best product'. The individuals who put themselves forward for office would be the extraordinary characters to act as 'leaders', and sell their values to the public as 'celebrities' (Wood et al., 2016). Once elected, there would be stark division of labour between the 'entrepreneurs' selected to lead, and a relatively obedient public, who would follow. Politicians lead, and they are re-evaluated on a periodic basis by electorates. Any extension of this model is both unworkable and dangerous.

This conception of representation is inhibiting and non-mediated. For example, Schumpeter implies that electorates should not seek to influence or engage their leaders in between elections:

> Control between elections, such as by imperative mandate or discretionary revocability (recall), or by an outpouring of public opinion on an issue sufficient to change official's prior views, all of which [Schumpeter] would legally prohibit as contrary to the spirit of the democratic method (Mackie, 2009, p. 144).

Where the *demos* are referred to, it is not in the form of a consenting citizenry, but as passive subjects:

> Democracy is portrayed by the image of a team of horses harnessed to a carriage driven by an aristocrat with a whip. A second aristocrat might seize the team from the first one, if he is stronger. Nothing more. (Mackie, 2009, p. 145)

Schumpeter's conception of democratic representation, therefore, hinges on a passive and obedient citizenry who do not push for democracy to be extended into the private

realm. Moreover, they accept (indeed, laud) political leadership from the aristocratic class, who are assumed to have superior knowledge necessary to govern. Schumpeter's theory influenced the growth of rational choice theories of democracy that have been criticised for creating public distrust of politicians and political parties, due to the emphasis placed on marketing, consumerism and individualism (Hay, 2007). Citizens are 'the bearers of preferences that are to be aggregated into a social utility function which the political system is expected to maximize' (Palumbo, 2010, p. 327).

Hayek's technocratic anti-politics

Friedrich Hayek's work provides a distinct angle of critique to Schumpeter's elitist argument. Hayek did not believe the state could design interventions in society from the top down, relying on a small number of elite 'experts' (Hayek 1944/2014). In this respect, Hayek was highly distrustful of the technocratic politics of Keynesian economists who believed in scientifically driven state planning as a complement to liberal democracy. However, he does not reject the importance of expertise out of hand. Instead, Hayek believed that if decision making power was distributed away from the state, those decisions would adequately represent the (self-interested) preferences of individual economic actors. Hayek's relevance as a theorist of technocracy is highlighted by Alfred Moore:

> While Hayek powerfully rejected the aspiration to prediction and control of complex social systems that he thought underpinned any attempt at economic planning, *he regarded his own approach as one grounded firmly in the science of complex systems* (Moore, 2021, p. 17 footnote 3, italics added).

Hayek argued for a type of 'self-organising' economic system where actors' 'tacit' knowledge, applied in their private interactions, would effectively represent their preferences in a complex and evolving marketplace, in place of a top down form of state administration he deeply distrusted. This connection is made in Hayek's work via the concept of *spontaneous order*. To understand spontaneous order, it is necessary to understand Hayek's view of the necessary distinction between a state and market-based political order.

> There is no other possibility than either *the order governed by the impersonal discipline of the market or that directed by the will of a few individuals* (Hayek 1944/2014, p.205, italics added).

This stark distinction is underpinned by an idea of the essential source of political authority, which, for Hayek, must come either from a single point – the state – or from the market where social order emerges from 'the undersigned novelties that constantly emerge in the process of adaptation' (Hayek, 1960/2006, p. 30). 'Markets', as Hayek sees them, are essentially natural, self-ordering mechanisms – 'the spontaneous forces of growth' (Hayek, 1960/2006, p. 34). Crucially, Hayek insists that the market creates order in an organic way that protects essential liberties, because of the principles of what he calls 'organization':

> The argument for liberty is not an argument against organization … Every organization is based on given knowledge; organization means commitment to a particular aim and to particular methods. (1960/2006, pp. 33–34)

Hence, while Hayek does not use the concept directly, expertise – or what he calls 'rationality' – is crucial to advancing society: 'for advance to take place, the social process from which the growth of reason emerges must remain free from its control' (Hayek, 1960/2006, p. 34). From here, Hayek justified rule by 'the market' on the basis that it creates social organisation through rationality.

Hayek's vision informs a version of representation – *spontaneous order* – that is resolutely anti-statist, in contrast to state-based conceptions of technocracy. Spontaneous order is representative in a broader sense, being the source of what Hayek called 'opinion' or 'a set of diffused beliefs about what is right which reflects unconscious social norms' (Bellamy, 1994, p. 422). Hayek was against centralised expert governance, which he says is inevitably dictatorial (Bellamy, 1994, p. 423). Indeed, as Andrew Gamble observes, 'If anything, Hayek had a stronger commitment to democracy than did [John Maynard] Keynes' (Gamble, 1996, p. 157). However, as Alfred Moore (2016, p. 57) argues, 'Hayek's suspicion of any sort of explicit communication oriented to the coordination of collective action leads him, ironically, to invoke a sort of second-order technocracy'. In short, Hayek's argument against top-down authoritarianism leads to him justifying rule by 'communities' of individuals who represent knowledge within their specific fields. His discussion of the nature of 'knowledge' in The Constitution of Liberty clarifies this:

> Not all the knowledge of the ever changing particular facts that man continually uses lends itself to organization or systematic exposition; much of it exists only dispersed among countless individuals. The same applies to that important part of expert knowledge which is not substantive knowledge but merely knowledge of where and how to find the needed information. (1960/2006, p. 24)

As such, as Greenwood (2010, p. 772) argues, Hayek's 'proposals for a market-driven model of political economy hinge upon the assignment of a significant role to judicial and legal experts in the non-market, legislative sphere'. Hayek makes the case for legal experts to ensure the independence of different spheres of economic life from state direction.

Focusing on Hayek is useful because he fleshes out a conception of technocratic *representation* based on expertise, but *distrustful* of the liberal democratic state and its associated processes of interest mediation. Hayek's scepticism about the finality of scientific evidence has informed potentially progressive ideas about democracy and the plurality of knowledge. Scholars of 'epistemic democracy' have made use of Hayek's arguments to suggest he provides tacit support for post-positivist conceptions of expertise where the variety of forms of expert knowledge is respected. Ober (2008), for example, claims that Hayek supports a notion of 'knowledge in action' while other epistemic democrats note his assumption that 'information is both held and constantly updated by individuals on a … local basis as they respond to the ever-changing world around them' (Gunn, 2014, p. 66). In *Democratic Reason*, Landemore (2017, p. 86) even argues Hayek offers 'fascinating insights' into 'the preconditions for the emergence of truth within the public sphere', whilst simultaneously being (ultimately) incompatible with 'the rule of the many'.

Landemore's insight that Hayek's thought is ultimately 'incompatible' with 'rule by the many' is crucial for understanding technocratic anti-politics. In contrast to Keynes'

disciples who advocated technocratic state intervention with government convening committees of scientific experts, a form of technocratic *politics*, Hayek promotes a specific version of technocratic *anti-politics* because he warns against state intervention and voices distrust in politicians and legislatures, *on the basis that they do not and cannot fully represent the diversity of forms of technical knowledge within the economy.*

Contrasting Schumpeter and Hayek enables us to see where arguments about 'reasoned speculation' prompt reflexivity, or entrench hierarchical thinking, in their interaction with representative democracy. Schumpeter is concerned about the limits of representation and the potential for bad decision making. However, unlike Hayek, Schumpeter does favour an empowered bureaucratic state, arguing that 'democratic government in modern industrial society must be able to command … it is not enough that the bureaucracy should be efficient in current administration and competent to give advice. It must be strong enough to guide' (1976/2003, p. 260). This goes directly against Hayek's vision of a decentralised polity of self-organising communities; indeed, Schumpeter's 'conclusions are anathema to Hayek with his commitment to individual liberty' (Greenwood, 2010, p. 781)

Hence, both Schumpeter and Hayek are distrustful of mediated party representation (they are both 'anti-politics' in this sense), and both argue for unmediated forms of representation to improve 'reasoned speculation'. However, while Schumpeter argues for rule by enlightened political leaders, Hayek argues for self-organising economic systems based on individual sources of expert knowledge. This point of tension is a key moment of divergence within different modes of technocratic thought, and are importantly distinct in how reflexive they are in their consideration of what unmediated forms of representation might be preferable to mediated forms.

Laclau and Pateman on the 'Will of the people'

Populist anti-politics is similar to the technocratic type to the extent that it poses a 'critique' of mediated representation (Bickerton & Accetti, 2017). As Caramani (2017, p. 60) argues, 'Populism and technocracy see themselves as antipolitics and, more specifically, antiparty'. By 'antiparty', Caramani means 'anti' the aggregation of societal interests via party politics, a key institutional feature of mediated representation. For populists, party 'elites' not only have insufficient access to relevant information and expert views (as technocratic anti-politics argues), but because they corruptly counteract the 'true' democratic will. However, various scholars have highlighted how populism is of 'ambiguous' value within representative democracy. Populism has been seen as a 'double edged sword' for both critiquing and correcting flaws in representative democracy, but also as a potential 'threat' (Canovan, 1999; see Vergara, 2020 for an extended discussion). Here, I analyse the reflexive and non-reflexive sides of populism by comparing different interpretations of the 'will of the people' in democratic thought, comparing Laclau's radical leftist populism and Pateman's participatory democracy. I argue that we ought to separate out Laclau's more directly populist form of anti-politics, with its strategically inflexible interpretation of the 'will of the people', from a distinct form of 'participatory anti-politics' that shares populist distrust of mediated representation, but interprets the popular will in a more pluralist and reflexive manner.

Laclau's Populist anti-politics

Ernesto Laclau's (2005) conception of populism provides the most explicit formulation of a populist idea of representation, which informs his distrust of representative democracy. With co-author Chantal Mouffe, Laclau has made the case for a radically democratic populist vision that seeks to use the channels and processes provided by representative democracy to undermine corrupt 'elites' (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985). In *On Populist Reason* Laclau defines certain 'preconditions' for the rise of populism, namely 'the formation of an … antagonistic frontier separating 'the people' from power' and 'an equivalential articulation of demands making the emergence of 'the people' possible' (Laclau, 2005, p. 74). There is 'a part which identifies itself with the whole' and uses strategic entry-points into the representative democratic system (for example political parties) as a way of colonising the system by exposing and exploiting its institutional biases.

Crucially, Laclau (2005, p. 167) argues that populism promotes 'forms of democracy outside the liberal symbolic framework'. As Canovan (1999, p. 2) notes, 'Many [populists] favour 'direct democracy' – political decision making by referendum and popular initiative. Their professed aim is to cash in democracy's promise of power to the people.' Referendums and similar 'democratic innovations' are, however, advocated not as a supplement to mediated representation, but as a corrective against liberalism. Liberalism requires 'neutral' institutions – like courts, expert agencies and a neutral civil service – that are anathema to populists. Populists may advocate economic liberalism (Weyland, 1999), but simultaneously seek to undermine *liberal political* institutions. They do so from a position they insist *is* democratic. This is what sets populism up to exacerbate political distrust – both the support for democracy and simultaneous distrust for its particular mediated form. This distrust means that populism 'can be something that both accompanies democracy and haunts it' (Arditi, 2004, p. 141).

In practice, populist distrust of mediated representation is manifested through a series of stylistic moves in how populist parties and leaders articulate the need for representation of the 'will of the people', homogenously conceived. Arditi (2010, p. 489) sets out this process as follows:

(1) 'When a series of social demands cannot be absorbed differentially by institutional channels, they become;
(2) unsatisfied demands that enter into a relationship of solidarity or equivalence with one another and;
(3) crystallize around common symbols that;
(4) can be capitalised by leaders who interpellate the frustrated masses and thus begin to incarnate a process of popular identification that;
(5) constructs 'the people' as a collective actor to confront the existing regime with the purpose of;
(6) demanding regime change.'

Distrust here arises through the gap that develops between what the public expect from party representation, and what it delivers (Flinders, 2012). Since the people's demands cannot be universally represented by a form of 'politics' requiring compromise,

they are left with no choice but to band together and develop a politicizing campaign, led by a single leader who 'interpolates' their demands and 'constructs' a singular solution.

For Laclau, there cannot be a way of balancing or mediating between the interests of multiple parties or sections of society. Laclau implies this would be submitting to a 'depoliticised' version of democracy, which he equates with technocracy (Bickerton and Accetti, 2017, p.193). Instead, he argues that 'an assemblage of heterogeneous elements kept equivalentially together only by a name is … *necessarily a singularity*' (Laclau, 2005, p. 100, italics added). Where groups excluded from society make claims for equality, they must, Laclau argues, necessarily reject the legitimacy of competing group demands. 'Thus', as Bickerton and Accetti (2017, p. 194) argue, Laclau's version of populism serves to 'undermine the legitimacy of political opposition as such, because in the face of a hegemonic representation of the 'people', any form of political opposition or resistance is bound to be perceived as illegitimate'.

Populist anti-politics as expressed in Laclau's work distrusts balanced competition for governing office, whilst simultaneously seeking to impose an alternative – 'direct' – vision of representation, namely, the unified implementation of the 'will of the people' through populist party leaders and referendums. Scholars note how this alternative conception of representation informs distrustful public attitudes. Norris, Garnett, and Grömping (2020, p. 106), for example, show in their study of the 2016 American presidential election, that 'distrust in elections is rooted in deep-seated psychological orientations among those favouring conspiratorialist beliefs and populist values'. Preferences for direct democratic mechanisms including referendums have been found to correlate with distrust in representative government (Bowler, Donovan, & Karp, 2007). Again, it is important to distinguish between populist anti-politics as a belief system, and 'populism' as a 'thin ideology'. Populist anti-politics as a conception of unmediated representation informing, and informed by, political distrust can be seen in the internal ideas and beliefs of those who use populist forms of rhetoric and sloganeering, which is part of populism but not its entirety. Populism as a 'thin' ideology professed by political parties has not been found to correlate with distrust among voters (Rooduijn, 2019). It is important therefore, when assessing populist anti-politics as a 'friend' or 'foe' of representative democracy, to distinguish its conception of unmediated representation, as seen in Laclau's thought, against the multifaceted components of populism more generally.

Pateman's participatory anti-politics

Carole Pateman's work is useful for teasing out elements of populist thought that can enable reflexivity, without resorting to a single, centralised leadership model. In this regard, I propose to distinguish a distinct type of *participatory anti-politics* that highlights the specific challenge posed by participatory democracy, with similarities to populism, but a more reflexive interpretation of the 'popular will'.

Pateman's theory of participatory democracy came about through her essential discontent that 'It is claimed that if we are to talk realistically about democracy then we must accept that the ordinary citizen is unlikely to become more interested or active in political affairs than he is at present' (Pateman, 1971, p. 292). In *Participation and Democratic Theory*, Pateman argued that liberal democratic theory tended to advocate participation within civic institutions, and especially in elections, but fails to extend

this logic to other parts of society, where what she called 'political efficacy' is developed. Critiquing the work of Almond and Verba (1963) on political culture, she argues that

> it is not just the impact of the national political structure that helps 'shape' the political culture, but authority structures, that is, political structures on a wide definition of the term 'political', in various social spheres; the impact of the authority structure of the workplace being particularly important. (1971, p. 303)

Pateman sets her theory up in the tradition of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, as a way of explaining how to improve political culture through participation:

> The existence of representative institutions at the national level is not sufficient for democracy … for a democratic polity to exist it is necessary for a participatory society to exist, i.e. a society where all political systems have been democratized. (Pateman, 1970, pp. 42–43)

While Pateman argues that participation in institutions throughout society can aid the functioning of representative legislatures, it is far from the only reason why participation is necessary:

> In the participatory theory 'participation' refers to (equal) participation in the making of decisions, and 'political equality' refers to equality of power in determining the outcome of decisions. (Pateman, 1970, p. 43)

Unlike in liberal theory, participation does not serve the *primary* purpose of enabling the 'right' decisions to be made, but rather, it fulfils the function of 'self-education':

> One might characterize the participatory model as one where maximum input (participation) is required and where output includes not just policies (decisions) but also the development of the social and political capacities of each individual. (Pateman, 1970, p. 43)

As such, participatory democratic theory views the representation of political views and opinions as being necessary in multiple spheres of life – including, especially, industry and the workplace. Engagement in particular workplace scenarios, especially those where individuals have greater personal autonomy over their work, creates 'feelings of personal confidence and efficacy that underly the sense of political efficacy' (Pateman, 1970, p. 51). Hence, Pateman argues for democratizing and encouraging equal citizen participation in industrial workplaces, including car factory plants, textile mills and other places of work, to improve psychological health, feelings of self-worth, and, as a result, overall 'political culture'.

Pateman's original thesis was complementary to 'classical' theories of liberal democracy, extending where and when political representation could happen, so as to enrich 'national' representative institutions. However, in later work she critiques the growth of institutionalised democratic 'innovations' and forms of participatory governance, arguing that they 'fit very easily within existing authority structures, and citizens are not participating, as a matter of right, in decisions about their city's or town's regular budget. Most of the innovations fall far short of participatory democracy' (Pateman, 2012, p. 14). Participatory democracy, she argues, is about challenging 'authority structures' and how they are organised, but 'most of the [current] expansion of participation does not disturb existing institutions' (Pateman, 2012, p. 15). Here, her work shows distrust of authority structures and institutions, rather than assimilation into their efficient functioning. Participatory democrats may support participation enabling good political

decision making at the level of state policy-making, but their concern is not always, or even primarily, at that level. They may therefore be seen as promoting 'anti-politics' to the extent that they reject settling for a traditional conception of representation limited to mediation through the state, and propose *radical* critique that pushes representative institutions and state authorities to ambitiously meet many of the democratic ideals those institutions and authorities often fail to meet.

Pateman's thought is interesting here because it shows where a line of populist critique of mediated representation diverges towards an advocacy of 'bottom up' forms of unmediated (authentic) representation through participation, as opposed to strategic support for a single party or leader. In essence, Pateman follows Laclau's line of reasoning on the exclusionary nature of state-based decision making structures and the modes of mediated representation imbued within them, but diverges in terms of the strategic choice to seek a singular form of rhetorical commitment to a party, leader or expression of popular will. Indeed, for Pateman, the 'popular will' must be conceptualized in a pluralist manner, owing to the historic exclusion of women from the public sphere. She views the expression of singular demands towards authority figures in the public sphere, a necessary characteristic of Laclau's radical democracy, as more problematic.

This view is illustrated in Pateman's lambasting critique of William Riker's presumption that Rousseau, with whom she affiliates her own participatory position, was a 'populist': 'Radical democratic theory involves a quite different conception of the individual, social life, and collective action from 'populism'' (Pateman, 1986, p. 40). Pateman uses her critique of social choice theorists' characterisation of participatory democratic thought to develop a nuanced conception of the 'will of the people':

> The general will presupposes that citizens act politically on the basis of a collectively self-conscious understanding of the value of living in a democracy, and that they 'will' the policies necessary to maintain it. *This is not to say that citizens always agree what the general will is but, rather, that they understand their own political practice.* (Pateman, 1986, p. 45, italics added)

Hence, Pateman draws a firm line between her own, nuanced, conception of the 'will of the people', and that of 'populism', which maintains the public will to be singular and unitary.

The reflexive potential of Laclau's populist anti-politics can also be critiqued when we consider the relationship between populism and the radical nationalist right. Direct political action aimed at colonising 'elite' institutions provides no 'get out' for those institutions to reflexively re-engage the public. To the extent that populist anti-politics accommodates 'reflexivity', it is only that it *forces* politicians and governments to respond, and the way they do so is likely to be more suppressive than productive, as seen in contemporary radical right-wing populist governments (McKean, 2016). Scholars have lamented Laclau and his followers' lack of reflexivity in considering the meaning of populism to challenge these forces:

> On the one hand, they have been univocal in their advocacy for a left populism, mainly as a vehicle for a radicalized democracy. On the other, their embrace of a formalist theory of populism delays (or externalizes) any strong positioning as to what 'modality' of populism is preferable (Boriello and Jäger, 2020, p.10)

Comparing Laclau and Pateman, as with Hayek and Schumpeter, demonstrates where the advocacy of unmediated forms of representation may facilitate ongoing contestation. It is at the precise point that Pateman recognises the *diversity* of popular will, and its expression in diverse bottom-up forms of representation in the workplace and household, that her distrust of mediated representation diverts to a consideration of forms of authentic representation outside of the state. In this respect, she follows the thought of Benjamin Barber's (2003) *Strong Democracy*, and the agenda of deliberative democrats, in considering a fuller agenda for democratising formal representative institutions, and thereby 'deepening democracy'. By contrast, Laclau follows other radical democrats, most notably Jacques Rancière (2010), in confronting state institutions with a unified oppositional will. This 'choice', from the perspective put forward in this article, refuses the idea that mediated representation can ever be made to reconsider the popular will because it relies on state institutions that are inherently repressive, owing to intersecting class, gender and race inequalities, among others.

Discussion and Conclusion

This article has argued that distrust in a representative democracy is more productive for representative democracy when such distrust is linked to and encourages 'reflexivity' about alternative forms of unmediated representation. It makes this argument by engaging and disaggregating the concept of anti-politics. This concept can be used to tease out the conditions under which distrust of politics can prompt the reinvigoration of representative democracy because it refers to a distrust in mediated representation and advocacy of alternative 'unmediated' forms of representation outside the state. The article provides a conceptual dissection of the political thinking behind two sets of political belief systems that scholars have recently identified as 'anti-politics': technocracy and populism. Through dissecting the political thought of four thinkers, the article shows the precise points at which technocratic and populist thinking diverges between either advocating 'reflexive' or 'non-reflexive' responses to distrust in democracy, hence leading to four types of anti-politics. Those points are where the thinkers in question consider their own commitments to 'rational' or 'reasonable' rule according to expertise, or their interpretation of the 'will of the people', and choose to either rely on a singular (unreflexive) or a pluralistic (reflexive) interpretation. While unreflexive, singular interpretations may be necessary when political leaders in a democracy refuse engagement in considering democratic reform, or act in an authoritarian manner, they do not provide a 'productive' approach to prompting or encouraging unmediated forms of representation as a complement to mediated structures.

My argument is that Pateman and Hayek's specific reasons for distrusting representative democracy can be viewed as encouraging *reflexivity* in the democratic system that comes from a preference for distributed forms of unmediated representation. Schumpeter and Laclau seek to essentially manipulate the system of mediated representation to serve unmediated ends. By contrast, Pateman and Hayek have relatively little to say about mediated political institutions, and instead propose methods for stimulating engagement in wider society to offer reflective feedback into mediated institutions. Hayek, of course, advocates the market as preferable for public knowledge and expertise to be represented in the economy, whereas Pateman suggests participation among

workers of all kinds to develop the kind of political efficacy that can be useful for representation in the mediated political system. Pateman offers a far more extensive, enlivening vision of democracy and its potential if representative institutions can be moved to engage effectively. Hayek, of course, is deeply sceptical that the state should respond in this way. Both thinkers, however, start by distancing themselves from mediated institutions to envisage ways of developing political and economic knowledge, that are acknowledged weaknesses of centralised representative democratic institutions. They essentially encourage *reflexivity* within liberal democratic systems *through* distributed forms of unmediated representation, sharing an acknowledgement of the plurality of, in turn,forms of expert knowledge and popular preferences.

Laclau and Schumpeter, by contrast, pay little attention to wider public engagement and its potential, instead of viewing mediated systems of representation as inherently faulty elite projects with a singular remedy. For Laclau, the corruption of political and economic elites is essentially irredeemable, while for Schumpeter the public cannot be trusted to make rational, reasonable decisions about matters of public life. Their response is not to distance themselves from those institutions' faults to develop representative qualities elsewhere, instead of seeking to suppress their faults by limiting the way in which democratic representation can and does occur (Schumpeter) or manipulating the mechanisms of mediated representation towards a political crusade against 'elites' (Laclau). Neither, therefore, seek to stimulate *reflexivity* within mediated representative democracy. Contrasted with the ideas of participatory and technocratic anti-politics, populist and elitist anti-politics do not offer easy 'redemption' for representative democracy through unmediated representative forms, because they do not encourage outlets for reflection and improvement in how representation works, instead of assuming unremittingly rationally self-interested citizens and politicians (Schumpeter) or corrupt elites (Laclau) require representation be squeezed into a singular outlet, either a charismatic, aristocratic leader or a singular representative 'of the people'.

Who, then, can we trust who distrusts politics? My answer is that this depends on whether those who claim to distrust politics are *reflexive* in considering the diversity of values associated with the concept they attach normative meaning to in the justifications they give for their distrust. This has implications for our understanding of the impact of technocratic and populist types of anti-politics on democratic thinking and practice. If you are reflexive in your consideration of who can and should be considered an 'expert', your technocratic views prompt you to consider how to stimulate social and economic activity through multiple sources of expertise. This was Hayek's view on the value of expertise and technical knowledge in the economy. If, on the other hand, you consider expertise to be a unique, uncontestable and singular quality, your views are closer to Schumpeter's, and assume a singular, uncontestable wisdom of the leader, which are not reflexive. Similarly, if you highlight the 'will of the people' as a key normative criterion of democracy, and yet fail to acknowledge the plurality of this 'will', then this means your political response will be non-reflexive. Participatory and technocratic anti-politics promote reflexivity, while elitist and populist anti-politics reject it.

In sum, as the quote from Bernard Crick at the start of this article suggests, those who purport to renew democracy may do so with the best of intentions, but we need to watch out in the struggle to revitalise democracy for 'false friends'. These false friends refuse to think reflexively about the concepts they use to expose representative democracy's

weaknesses. Mediated representation may well fall short in expressing the 'will of the people' and integrating the best forms of expertise into decision making. However, the alternatives are far from straightforward in themselves. Those who are distrustful of mediated representation ought to acknowledge that the alternative concepts they value – 'expert knowledge' and 'the will of the people' – are in themselves diverse and contested.

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