What's the Best Form of Government?

Part II: Are There Any Alternatives?

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"No one pretends that democracy is perfect or all-wise. Indeed, it has been said that democracy is the worst form of government except all those other forms that have been tried from time to time."

– Winston Churchill

1 **Rule by the Educated?**

Motivation: The problem of voter ignorance.

How will it work?

Give the votes of the educated greater influence through plural voting, vote weighting, or restriction of suffrage.

Will it work?

- **Problem 1:** Doesn't justice/fairness require equal weighting?
- **Problem 2:** Can the selection/weighting criteria be reliably free of bias?
- **Problem 3:** Can the selection/weighting process be reliably protected from capture or destabilization by powerful interests?

1   Rule by the Educated?

Mill (1861, Ch. 8) on Plural Voting

"But though every one ought to have a voice—that every one should have an equal voice is a totally different proposition. When two persons who have a joint interest in any business differ in opinion, does justice require that both opinions should be held of exactly equal value? If, with equal virtue, one is superior to the other in knowledge and intelligence—or if, with equal intelligence, one excels the other in virtue—the opinion, the judgment, of the higher moral or intellectual being is worth more than that of the inferior: and if the institutions of the country virtually assert that they are of the same value, they assert a thing which is not." (p. 109)

1 Rule by the Educated?

Mill (1861, Ch. 8) on Plural Voting

"In any future Reform Bill which lowers greatly the pecuniary conditions of the suffrage, it might be a wise provision to allow all graduates of universities, all persons who have passed creditably through the higher schools, all members of the liberal professions, and perhaps some others, to be registered specifically in those characters, and to give their votes as such in any constituency in which they choose to register; retaining, in addition, their votes as simple citizens in the localities in which they reside." (p. 113)
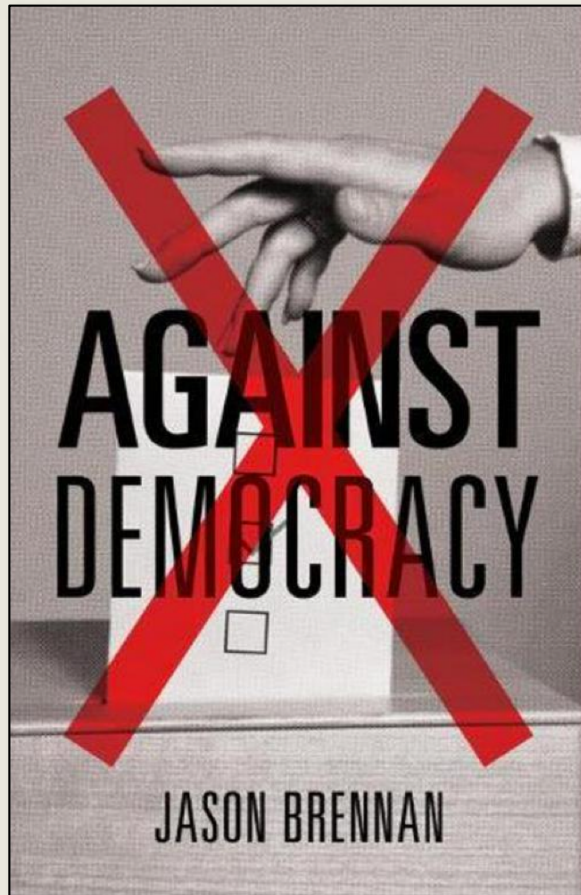
1   Rule by the Educated?

> ### *Mill (1861, Ch. 8) on Plural Voting*
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> "Until there shall have been devised, and until opinion is willing to accept, some mode of plural voting which may assign to education, as such, the degree of superior influence due to it, and sufficient as a counterpoise to the numerical weight of the least educated class; for so long the benefits of completely universal suffrage cannot be obtained without bringing with them, as it appears to me, a chance of more than equivalent evils." (p. 113)

I   Rule by the Educated?

Brennan's (2016) "Epistocracy"

"[I]n an epistocracy, the right to vote is apportioned, to some degree, according to knowledge. An epistocracy might grant everyone the right to vote, but weigh some votes more than others, or more might exclude citizens from voting unless they can pass a basic test of political competence."

(Brennan 2016)

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1   Rule by the Educated?

Mill again…

"Every one has a right to feel insulted by being made a nobody, and stamped as of no account at all. No one but a fool, and only a fool of a peculiar description, feels offended by the acknowledgment that there are others whose opinion, and even whose wish, is entitled to a greater amount of consideration than his.

(Mill 1861, p. 109)

1   **Rule by the Educated?**

Mill again…

"To have no voice in what are partly his own concerns is a thing which nobody willingly submits to; but when what is partly his concern is also partly another's, and he feels the other to understand the subject better than himself, that the other's opinion should be counted for more than his own accords with his expectations, and with the course of things which in all other affairs of life he is accustomed to acquiesce in. It is only necessary that this superior influence should be assigned on grounds which he can comprehend, and of which he is able to perceive the justice."

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2   Rule by Lottery?

Motivation: The problem of capture.

How will it work?

- Elections are replaced by lotteries.
- Representatives are now randomly chosen from the whole eligible population (as with jury service).
- They serve for a single term (of perhaps three years).
- Instead of one assembly, there are different assemblies for different policy areas (e.g. one for agricultural policy, one for defence policy, one for education policy).

2   Rule by Lottery?

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Will it work?

Some advantages of "lottocracy" (see Guerrero 2014b for more):

- "lotteries excel at preventing corruption or undue influence in the selection of representatives."

- "lottery selection is likely to result in more descriptively representative officials than elections."

- "those selected have not sought out political office."

- "elections lead elected officials to focus on those problems for which they can get or claim credit for addressing, and to ignore or put on the back burner those problems with a longer horizon or those solutions for which it is harder to get credit."

- "the use of lotteries better respects fundamental ideals of equality and particularly political equality."

2   Rule by Lottery?

Motivation: The problem of capture.

Will it work?

However…

- **Problem 1:** There's no guarantee that a lottery will produce a representative legislature.

- **Problem 2 (cf. Brennan):** Won't the members of a randomly selected assembly (on the whole) lack the knowledge needed to make good decisions?

3 Pay-per-Vote?

Motivation: The problem of the "tyranny of the majority".

How will it work?

- "Under quadratic voting (QV), everyone votes on proposals (in the case of referenda) or candidates by buying as many votes pro or con as they want. The price they pay is the square of the number of votes they buy. The amount collected is redistributed back to the voters on a pro rata basis" (Posner and Weyl 2014).

- Quadratic voting allows a minority to defend its interests—provided it is able and willing to pay for greater influence.

3 Pay-per-Vote?

Motivation: The problem of the "tyranny of the majority".

Will it work?

- **Problem 1:** Vote buying?!
- **Problem 2:** Doesn't this give too much influence to the rich?
- **Problem 3:** Doesn't this give too little influence to the poor and disaffected?

3   Pay-per-Vote?

Motivation: The problem of the "tyranny of the majority".

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… and, probably, all those untried forms anyone has yet thought of.