



Strong Democracy in Crisis: Promise or Peril?

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This is a robust and relevant collection from a truly distinguished group of political theorists actively rethinking the promise and perils of democracy. The book is coherent in its focus on a common theme and aim: to advance and refine the political project of promoting democratic theory and practice. While the contributors are admirers of the promotion of various models of democracy they also express distinct approaches and concerns. Each builds on and expands the central theme of democracy and ultimately contends with potential limits of current configurations of democratic life. While to some extent they share common concerns they express considerable dissent and fruitful opposition that deepens and advances the debate. Contributors explore democracy from different perspectives: law and constitutionalism, globalization and development, public life and the arts, pluralism, democracy and education, and democratic listening and democratic participation. The contributions point towards new ways of living and thinking politically, new directions for contending with some of the more significant and seemingly intractable political problems, challenging conventional presuppositions about democracy by expanding the boundaries of what kinds of democracy may be possible.

The book critiques liberal notions of democracy that forefront rational autonomy and a citizenship characterized by narrow self-interest, and critique naïve claims that any infringement on the rights of the autonomous individual must invariably lead to authoritarianism and totalitarianism. Instead contributors suggest that the abandonment of the *res publica* in pursuit of private interests may well lead to arid politics or authoritarianism. Citizens are called upon to be more than just voters but rather define themselves by participation in a community beyond their self-interest—in fact arguing, like Aristotle, Rousseau, Jefferson and Arendt, that we are only human when we participate in something beyond ourselves, that we forge and preserve our political community by our commitment to and participation in robust debate and meaningful political action. Contributors are not only revolutionary scholars that challenge problematic streams of democratic theory and traditions, but are deeply involved in shaping the character and constitution of the American body politic and promoting debates about community and citizenship and justice around the world.

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