

Drastic Disagreement and Our Interest in Democracy

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Abstract: Democrats tend to take disagreement involving justice as relevant for democratic legitimacy. In this manuscript, I draw on political realists' claim about the distinctive nature of politics and argue that democrats should also be concerned with disagreement involving what politics is for, because citizens uninterested in justice might fail to find a justice-based justification of democracy acceptable. Then, I lay out a prudential justification of democracy aiming to show that democracy is rationally acceptable as the sole regime that satisfies three second-order interests that all citizens have: in understanding, revising and pursuing their first-order interests. In so doing, I offer an innovative reconceptualization of the notion of interest as moderately subjectivist: interests are then a function of preferences and values, on one hand, and full factual information and rational reasoning, on the other. I conclude by responding to two possible objections to such a prudential justification.

Keywords: Democracy, Disagreement, Legitimacy, Political Realism, Interests.

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