

Dewiel, Boris Cedric, 'Democracy As Diversity: Civil Society, Pluralism and the Limits of the State', Ph.D. thesis, University Of Calgary, 1998

Democracy is a bifurcated notion. George Sabine pointed out that we have inherited two democratic traditions, one beginning with the English and the other with the French Revolution. The current study into the meaning of democracy weighs the merits of the two conceptions by tracing the history of a few political ideas. Inspired by Isaiah Berlin, the result is a theory of democracy as diversity among an identifiable core of conflicting values, each of which belongs to the culture of modern democracy. Politics at its best may be described in terms of the irresolvable contest between these ideals. This contest has become institutionalised in modern democratic practices, so modern democracy may be defined as the permanent institutionalised contest among a definable range of ideals. This theory is tested using international survey data. If democracy is the rule of the people, what do we mean by the people as a single entity? The study begins with the history of the idea of civil society as distinct from the state. In reaction to the universalism of the eighteenth century, there arose a pluralistic belief that each nation is home to a unique people. In turn, the idea of pluralism must be understood in terms of changes in the language of morality. In a reaction to the rediscovery of Aristotle, divine command morality asserted God's will as the source of value – the good was what God actively valued – and this idea became secularised. The new central term of morality remained a verb as well as a noun, but the source of value became the human will. The fact of competing conceptions of the good could now be expressed as value pluralism. The histories of the values of positive and negative liberty in their most important guises are next compared. The conflicts among these values in their individualistic and communal forms are hypothesised to be common among democratic nations. The theory is summarised in a model of ideological diversity. A preliminary empirical test suggests that diversity in this form is inherent to democracy.