

A final question concerns the account of human nature upon which natural rights and natural law depend. Here Locke poses a problem extending well beyond the ambiguity of his writing. Seagrave's argument grounds natural law and natural rights in the twofold structure of human beings as members of a common species and as individual selves—a Lockean insight that Locke himself renders problematic by his direct attack, in Book III of *An Essay concerning Human Understanding*, on our ideas of substance and natural species. An explanation of how Locke's own idea of human nature, as well as those of Aristotle, Cicero, and Aquinas, can withstand that attack would further strengthen the book's argument.

Those questions notwithstanding, *The Foundations of Natural Morality* is all in all a most impressive achievement—impressive for any scholar at any stage and especially so for one so early in his career. It is a remarkably well educated, finely crafted, and in many ways ingenious effort. It should serve also as a salutary scholarly intervention. At a moment in the history of our discipline marked by the ascendancy of antifoundationalist thinking and by internal division and confusion among those who continue to inquire into moral and political foundations, students of political philosophy can learn much from Adam Seagrave's fine book, both about the possibility of recovering our rational foundations and about our prospects for governing ourselves without them.

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Nadia Urbinati: *Democracy Disfigured: Opinion, Truth, and the People*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014. Pp. 320.)

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I read Nadia Urbinati's meticulously argued book during the week that right-wing parties such as the United Kingdom Independence Party in the U.K. and Le Front National in France made record-breaking gains in elections to the European Parliament. A week or two later, Lord Jim Knight suggested on the BBC that the British second legislative chamber, the House of Lords, could be replaced by citizens' juries. Urbinati's book provides some very useful ways of understanding these sorts of events. Electoral victories and propositions for more citizen involvement in lawmaking might seem to be the very epitome of democracy; this timely book, however, provides some powerful arguments for why liberal democrats should harbor a suspicion that the familiar face of democracy is in danger of disfigurement by epistemic, populist, and plebiscitarian threats to deform it.

For Urbinati, democracy is ideally a procedural and *diarchic* system in which the democratic sovereign has two powers: will and opinion. While the democratic will is understood to be the "procedures, rules and

institutions" (22) of formal lawmaking, opinion is an informal power that is nonetheless indispensable. Opinion includes the ongoing struggle of citizens to get what matters to them onto the political agenda, to dissent, to participate, and on occasion, when they vote, to make authoritative decisions. This combination of will and opinion requires that procedures take precedence, because it is only the procedural character of democracy that guarantees equal political liberty for all citizens and the possibility that they might live together in peace under circumstances of irresolvable disagreement, in the knowledge that decisions are reversible and leaders can be replaced.

The threats that Urbinati discerns to democracy, then, are all characterized by the conviction that there is some other value that trumps procedural political equality. For each one, she traces its history and engages in detail with its theoretical proponents. For *epistemic* theorists (chap. 2), who privilege the citizen's role in judging and exercising surveillance over power, rather than exercising it, and some of whom advocate political technologies such as deliberative committees and citizens' juries, it is the possibility of getting to the "right answer" in a way that democratic procedures do not guarantee that constitutes this value. For *populists* (chap. 3), it is the desire to gain control of the myths, narratives, and symbols of the dominant political discourse in order that the masses might gain hegemonic control and be enshrined at the heart of political decision-making. And for *plebiscitarians* (chap. 4), the aesthetic becomes the key value: politics becomes a spectator sport, as citizens' discursive role in debating and participating in the political process is debased to cheering and booing at political leaders on television, culminating in voting them either in or out as if the democratic process were no more than a TV reality show.

Where this book is, for me, most interesting and persuasive is Urbinati's analysis of just how depoliticizing this all is, perhaps contrary to initial appearances. While deliberative committees might seem on the face of it to expand and enhance the ability of citizens to take part in political decision-making, in practice such technologies keep crucial decisions outside the political realm: "the formation of the agenda and the frame of the questions to be discussed. . . are not part of the political process" (115). Likewise, although popular attempts to gain control of the political narrative might seem to enhance the ability of the masses to participate in politics on improved terms, the concrete example of Peronism given by Laclau, the principal writer on populism discussed by Urbinati, ends up in practice to mean that a popular leader can gain mass support without corresponding accountability to any individual citizen in the crowd. And finally, while the ability of citizens to observe every action of a powerful leader and make a judgment on his (and it probably is his) performance in a mass plebiscite might seem to reconcile the age of twenty-four-hour news and declining civic participation with the demands of electoral democracy, the spectator judge is always making a decision after the fact on terms he or she didn't choose. There is no question, in a plebiscitarian democracy, of citizens advocating, debating,

and voting according to their own interests and holding leaders accountable accordingly.

The upshot of these insights in terms of concrete prescriptions is less well-developed, but Urbinati signals the clear implication that a vigilant attitude to such issues as campaign finance and the ownership of the media is required of committed democrats. This is because, for liberal democratic procedures to function as they should—that is to say, *politically*—it must be possible, at least in principle, for each individual citizen to exercise the power of opinion and to get their issue or interest onto the agenda and make it the focus of public debate. Freedom of opinion is precisely what is stifled by a news media that is hijacked by overweening power or a public sphere dominated by opinions bought in exchange for money.

It is clear that Urbinati is aware that the procedures we have, the opportunities that we have to speak, the framing of a set of debates, are decisive in terms not only of the outcomes we might expect, but also in terms of the sorts of interests we understand ourselves as having, the voting decisions we might take, even the sorts of people we take ourselves to be. To put it another way, if you change the game, you change not just the outcome, but also the character of the players. And it is here that democrats of a less liberal persuasion are likely to depart from Urbinati.

After all, as the epistemic theorists that Urbinati takes on in chapter 2 have shown very clearly, a change in procedures, such as the requirement to spend time on deliberation, can dramatically change the outcome of a democratic decision (Robert Goodin and Simon Niemeyer, “Where Does Deliberation Begin? Internal Reflection Versus Public Discussion in Deliberative Democracy,” *Political Studies* 51, no. 4 [2003]: 627–94). This is, at least in part, because in the very process of deliberating we reflect on the sorts of people we are, or could be, or wish to be, and, therefore, what sorts of interests we might concomitantly have. This is a point well understood by Laclau, and Urbinati’s engagement with his work is perhaps less sensitive than it could be on the issue of subject formation. Laclau grounds his work not only in Gramscian ideas about hegemony, but also in Lacanian theory about the ways in which the subject is produced, performatively, through discursive acts. For Laclau, then, we are not already individual subjects with pre-given identities and interests *prior* to any democratic engagement. Rather, our subjectivity—as liberal individual citizens or as solidaristic members of a crowd—comes into being as part of a process of engaging with the myths, symbols, narratives, and stories we encounter and use, including the myths of ourselves as voters and individual democratic citizens, (re)producing and transforming them, as they (re)produce and transform us (see Ernesto Laclau, *On Populist Reason* [Verso, 2005], esp. 102–4). The very myth of the autonomous, sovereign individual using procedures to enable him or her to advance prior interests not only is sustained by liberal democratic, electoral procedures themselves, in which the individual voter/citizen is supreme, but also sustains them.

For this reason, proponents of various nonliberal forms of democracy (deliberative theorists, and proponents of ant/agonistic democracy, for example) will want to show how accounts like Urbinati's use myths, symbols, and narratives, including her powerful legitimating stories from the ancient Greek and Roman world, that produce the liberal subjects she assumes as the normative lynchpin of her argument. For liberals and nonliberals alike, however, this book is a useful and powerful reminder to be alert to the potentially depoliticizing consequences of any move to refigure democracy, however democratic it may at first seem.

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Adam Adatto Sandel: *The Place of Prejudice: A Case for Reasoning within the World*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014. Pp. 288.)

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The term “prejudice” carries largely pejorative connotations, signifying an unreflective narrowness of mind and sentiment, an obstacle to clear understanding and wise judgment. Thus the elimination of prejudice and its manifestations is widely and variously embraced as a worthy intellectual and political objective, as if a world unmoved by prejudice would be preferable to one swayed by it. Yet according to Hans-Georg Gadamer the common stance of modern thought since the Enlightenment has embodied a “prejudice against prejudice” — a preconception or prejudgment that preconceptions and prejudgments are ill founded and are improper guides to thought and action. Self-consciously following Gadamer, Sandel seeks to “elaborate and defend [a] situated conception of judgment” that properly understands the ineluctable and ultimately fruitful role of prejudice in thought and action (3). In rehabilitating prejudice, Sandel sketches an alternative basis for judgment that draws breath from the most profound habits of heart and mind.

Sandel traces the modern distrust of prejudice to seventeenth- and eighteenth-century valorizations of the self-possessed mind whose independent use of reason is the standard of true thought and right action. From Francis Bacon and René Descartes we have inherited the view that knowledge, whether in the natural sciences or in abstract philosophy, depends solely upon the illumination of the objective world by the detached rational subject, unaffected by the contingencies of subjective desires, the accidents of environment, and the preconceptions inculcated by external authorities. Thinkers such as Adam Smith added to this epistemological doctrine an ethical dimension, insisting that prejudice distorts ethical judgment. Yet it was Immanuel Kant who offered the purest and most comprehensive statement of the case against prejudice, claiming that prejudice not only separates thought and judgment from truth, but also subjugates the will to