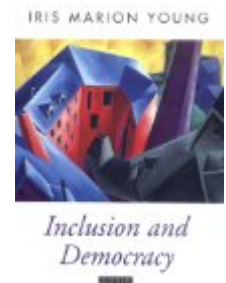


Iris Marion Young. *Inclusion and Democracy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000. x + 304 pp. \$29.95, cloth, ISBN 978-0-19-829754-3.



Reviewed by Boris DeWiel

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One Democratic Tradition

If democracy is a process of transformation by the people as a whole, can it make room for a diversity of sub-groups within the whole? Can democracy respect differences while also becoming more inclusive? These questions form the basis of Iris Marion Young's *Inclusion and Democracy*.

The first chapter compares aggregative and deliberative models of democracy, favoring the latter but noting some of its shortcomings. The second focuses on legitimate modes of political communication including rhetoric and public protests. The third chapter defends the politics of difference against a range of theorists who seek, in various ways, some level of undifferentiated solidarity. The fourth and fifth chapters review the modes and meanings of political representation and civil society, respectively. The sixth focuses on the politics of difference at the local level, while the seventh and final chapter examines the challenges of inclusive-yet-pluralistic democracy at the global level.

The book marks a level of success in Young's career that presents her with new challenges. Her earlier work attracted the attention of a range of commentators to whom this book is in part a response. In responding, Young provides a range of new arguments that attempt to broaden the theory of deliberative democracy, so as to make room for the politics of difference discussed in her earlier work.[1] While the interaction is interesting and enlightening, the result is that the book sometimes has a scattershot quality. Her agility in argument is impressive but her targets change so quickly and often that she sometimes seems to aim in contrary directions.

Young's flexibility of argument begins with her definition of democracy. At the outset she writes, "I shall assume a minimalist understanding of democracy as given: that democratic politics entails a rule of law, promotion of civil and political liberties, free and fair election of law-makers" (p. 5). The choice to define democracy minimally would seem a wise one in a book aimed at inclusion. Democracy is a contested concept, the meaning of which is itself a deeply politi-

cal question. A minimal definition would serve to increase the inclusiveness of democracy by bringing a wider range of political contestants within its fold. The problem is that within a few paragraphs Young begins to shift her argument by adding evaluative criteria to her definition, so that democracy quickly becomes exclusive, leaving out those who do not see politics as she does.

In an essay that remains a classic, George Sabine pointed out that we have inherited two competing conceptions of democracy, one originating in Rousseau's transformative politics and the other in Locke's principle of toleration.[2] Several decades hence, Sabine's distinction remains useful: For today's Rousseauvian democrats, politics is the process by which we create ourselves as a moral community; for contemporary Lockean democrats, politics is a means of dealing with the inherent differences within and among existing moral communities. Rousseauvian democrats want to transform the people, while Lockean democrats want to find the best way to deal with them as they are.

Young is a Rousseauvian democrat. For her, democracy requires that citizens be willing to set aside their existing moral commitments, so that they will be "open to having their own opinions and understandings of their interests change in the process" (p. 6). Personal transformation is a core value of Rousseauvian democrats, but in actual existing democracies they are far from a majority. For most people, it is safe to say, politics is no more than the necessary but often annoying work of conducting public business. They do not want to be transformed but only to be served by the political process. (The Rousseauvian answer is that today's majorities feel this way only because the desired transformations have not happened--but this begs the question as to whether transformation is necessarily the goal of democracy.) As Young moves beyond a minimal definition acceptable to all sides, the inclusiveness of her concept of democracy quickly narrows. According to her

theory, those who are unwilling to give up their settled moral commitments are excluded from participation by definitional fiat. Thus Young's theory of "inclusive" democracy excludes those who, in actual existing democracies, are most likely to be opposed to her own policy preferences. Yet her own settled conviction that transformative politics are supreme is not up for democratic discussion.

Young recognizes that democracy is a contested topic, but she characterizes the contest in a way favoured by Rousseauvian democrats. Unlike Sabine's pluralistic description of two traditions without prejudice to either, Young adopts a distinction between "adversarial democracy" and "deliberative democracy" for the purposes of advocating the latter (p. 18-26). The ultimate reason for choosing deliberative democracy is that it "conceptualizes the process of democratic discussion as not merely expressing and registering, but as *transforming* the preferences, interests, beliefs, and judgements of participants" (p. 26, emphasis in original). Before there can be democracy, there must be a consensus as to the supremacy of the transformative ideal. However, in actual existing democracies politics is (among other things) a contest between progressive ideas and traditionalist ones. In reality, the transformative vision of progressives is only one slice of the larger democratic pie. Democracy is bigger than Rousseauvians know.

For those who would like to restrict the proper meaning of democracy in this way, by making transformative values the price of admission to the arena of democracy, Young's book is a valuable contribution to the late-Rousseauvian canon. Her footnotes alone are an excellent source of references to and comments on the recent literature in this tradition, and she offers a range of new arguments that demonstrate the continuing vitality of thought on this side. However, for those who see politics as a contest of traditions and ideas, including a legitimate, enduring conflict over the

core values and meaning of democracy, Young's idea of inclusiveness may feel too narrow.

Notes

[1]. Iris Marion Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990).

[2]. George Sabine, "The Two Democratic Traditions," *Philosophical Review* 61 (1952): 451-74.

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