Editorial

Jean-Paul Gagnon and Mark Chou

This issue begins with Peter Strandbrink's argument that "standard liberal democratic theory should be pressed significantly harder to recognize the lexical and conceptual fact that civic political and cognitive participation in mass liberal democracies belong to different theoretical species." It is by conflating both of these theoretical species, which Strandbrink sees as the dominant tendency in contemporary democratic theory, that we inhibit our ability to critically evaluate "epistocratic theoretical registers." Further unsettling is Stranbrink's view that, once separated from each other, neither the theories of civic political or cognitive participation offer much help in dealing with the rise of "alt-facts" or "post-truth" in liberal democratic societies today.

The issue continues with Stephen J. Rosow's article on the United States' neoliberal approach to war. The United States, Rosow argues, has developed a practice of publicly memorializing war in an attempt to garner more support for its military policies. These efforts at placing reminders of war in public spaces (i.e., memorial highways, commemorative plaques at traveler's rest stops, etc.) are made, in Rosow's view, to try to keep the American public on the side while the state continues to advance a style of warfare that distances its citizens from the battlefield. Rosow reveals the irony of a state that requires public support for its war policies but that must also distance its citizens from the horrors of war in order to keep those same policies afloat. (The realities of war have proven increasingly unpopular in the US domestic setting, meaning that the closer citizens get to war, the less likely they will be to support prowar policy). The unveiling of this tactic gives critics of war a means to respond.

Following on from here is Kyong-Min Son's effort at expanding the current debate on the crisis of representative democracy by exposing its roots in the Cold War when democracy and free-market capitalism became fused. Son works through Hayek's theory of neoliberal democracy to expose how free-market capitalism can undermine democracy—it erodes the social relations to which democracies are predisposed.

The final article in this issue is Thomas D. Bunting's analysis of sport (namely baseball), which highlights the value of spectator democracy. Bunting sets out how mid-nineteenth-century baseball represented Amer-

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ica's racial politics on-field. Players, spectators, and commentators alike were each enmeshed in real-time enactments of racial politicking that, Bunting argues, is a historical example that shows "spectatorship . . . can be an important sphere of activity in democratic life."

The issue includes John B. Min's interview of Jason Stanley and his views on the role of propaganda in liberal democratic societies. Stanley argues that "the inability to address the crisis of liberal democracies can be partially explained by contemporary political philosophy's penchant for idealized theorizing about norms of justice *over* transitions from injustice to justice." The road to justice, the *how* of obtaining it, is, for Stanley, inseparable from truth and facts. This, therefore, posits a juncture for liberal democracy: How can it hope to achieve justice while it accommodates populists and demagogues who usurp the path to justice through the destruction of truth? The answer to this question, as Min and Stanley suggest, may very well help prevent the return of fascism from inside the liberal democratic body.

Wrapping up this issue is *Democratic Theory*'s first Research Note. We are hoping it will help set an agenda for research into democracy's many and varied forms, which was an aspiration present at the journal's founding. To get the ball rolling, Gagnon offers a list of 2,234 real descriptions of democracy, which he found in the Google Books and Google Scholar databases. Gagnon argues that this empirical finding offers at least four theoretical outlets for any interested party to pursue. The first consists of drilling down into the meaning of each description of democracy in the catalogue. For example, what does anti-aristocratic democracy mean, exactly? Might it offer some novel purchase into ongoing political debates? Is it synonymous with other descriptions of democracy, and, if yes, might there be family resemblances between two or more descriptions, and what if anything might *that* mean? The second consists of creating taxonomies, which entails formalizing and organizing the literature associated with a description of democracy in temporal terms to create that description's evolutionary narrative. The third consists of detecting which of the 2,234 descriptions of democracy exist in situ and exploring how this "blend" of democracies characterizes any given polity's democratic nature at any given point in time. And the fourth consists of reapproaching the meaning of democracy from an ontologically updated vantage point: What, in other words, might we learn about the meaning of democracy by studying this minimum approximation of its descriptions all at once and as a whole? Would it present English-speakers with a more scientific, reliable, holistic, or ecumenical definition of democracy—and how might this compare with results from the same study conducted in *different* languages? What might such a comparative effort provide?

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Scholars pursuing one of these approaches or closely related approaches are invited to submit Research Notes of up to six thousand words for review. Please, however, write to the editors first to discuss your proposed Research Note prior to submission.

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