(BOOK REVIEW)

DEMOCRATIC JUSTICE AND THE SOCIAL CONTRACT: A CRITICAL REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

This paper is an attempt to review the book “Democratic Justice and the Social Contract” by Albert Weale. The work gains prominence in the wake of increasing demands for expansion of the deliberative democratic mechanisms and democratic justice. Practice of democracy, in a broader sense, reflects the basic idea that the people are the contract makers and that they can amend the contract according to their will. Hence, the idea of democratic contract that is based on the idea of social contract plays a prominent role in constructing institutions that are mutually beneficial to everyone. But the functional forms of these institutions make us wonder whether they really reflect the social contract derived democratic contract. Functional forms of democracy reveal many loopholes that undermine its theoretical assumptions like equality of individuals, democratic power derived from people etc. To overcome these loopholes and to make democratic practice more nearer to the assumptions of social contract different aspects of democracy like representation, expansion of decision making power in a horizontal and vertical manner, democratic justice, social security from structural violence etc. needs to be addressed. Representational mechanisms of a democracy should provide deliberative opportunities to all the sections of the people and the practice of democracy should be based on the idea of democratic justice that should take care of the structural violence. Weale’s “Democratic Justice and the Social Contract” is an attempt to look at the practice of democracy in the background of its similarities to social contract theory and it tries to define the just conditions that are required for individuals and groups to be part of such a contract.


References