

# THE ROLE OF EXPERTS IN A DEMOCRATIC DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

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## ABSTRACT

In recent discussions regarding social epistemology, and especially among political philosophers, there has been a marked increase in the importance of the question of the epistemic justification of democracy, which ought to be, along ethical and political justification, a necessary condition of attaining democratic legitimacy. The newfound importance of the issue of the epistemic justification of democracy within political philosophy can be largely attributed to the works of Fabienne Peter, whose contribution is best illustrated through her successful melding of political and epistemological issues, a feat long evaded by many of her colleagues. According to Peter, the instrumentalizing nature of the standard approach to the epistemic justification of democracy fails to incorporate the irreducible pluralist value of individual agency and the procedural epistemic value of collective discussions.

Her proceduralist critiques of the standard approach to epistemic justification have rejected the justification of the inclusion of experts in democratic decision-making, maintaining that democracy can be epistemically justified without the involvement of experts in decision-making processes. Fabienne Peter has undoubtedly offered the best articulation of the proceduralist objection to the inclusion of experts in democratic decision-making. Once I have provided a summary of her argumentation, I will attempt to offer a critical review and elaborate an alternative approach to the democratic and epistemic justifications of including experts in decision-making processes.

## KEYWORDS

Decision-making process, experts, proceduralism, epistemic instrumentalism, political instrumentalism, hybrid model, reasonable disagreement

## INTRODUCTION

In recent discussions regarding social epistemology, and especially among political philosophers, there has been a marked increase in the importance of the question of the epistemic justification of democracy, which ought to be, along ethical and political justification, a necessary condition of attaining democratic legitimacy. It is claimed that, apart from being justified as a politically and ethically fair system,

democracy should also be an epistemically justified social system capable of generating the best possible decisions. Proponents of the so-called standard epistemic justification of democracy base their thinking on the assumption that democratic legitimacy must additionally be grounded on the production of epistemically high-quality decisions (true, truth-sensitive, truth-conducive, correct, justified, rational, epistemically responsible and so on<sup>1</sup>). However, this assumption is often challenged by those who do not hold that epistemic justification is either necessary or conducive to democratic legitimacy or, on the other hand, those who accept the necessity of the epistemic justification of democracy, but deem that it cannot be reduced to the production of true or justified decisions.<sup>2</sup> Such reactions are highly influenced by a stance regarding the status of experts within the democratic decision-making process, the viewpoint that epistemic justification necessarily entails a certain notion of expertism (experts' elitism) or even epistocracy, which is a stark antithesis to democracy.

## PROCEDURALIST CRITIQUE OF THE ROLE OF EXPERTS IN THE DEMOCRATIC DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

In discussions regarding the epistemic justification of democracy, the standpoint of epistemic proceduralism is certainly among the more relevant and minutely elaborated positions. Proponents of epistemic proceduralism, including prominent supporters such as David Estlund and Fabienne Peter (Estlund 1997, 2008, Peter 2008, 2016), claim that epistemically high-quality decisions are based on the appropriate democratic procedures. It is crucial to note that both of them emphasise the necessity of eliminating the privileged treatment of experts taking part in the decision-making process from such proper democratic procedures. At first glance, many would agree with the proceduralist rejection of privilege as anti-democratic and

1 The debate about which epistemic values ought to be preferred is external to the topic of this article. Of course, from an epistemic perspective, there are numerous differences between presenting arguments in favour of any particular stance, be it Philip Kitcher's (Kitcher 2011) pragmatic view that a democratic system is legitimate if it manages to successfully solve the problems of its citizens, or the stance that a system's legitimacy lies within the reliability of its truth-sensitive decision making mechanisms, a standpoint defended by Alvin Goldman and Thomas Christiano (Goldman 2010, Christiano 2012). The discussion within this article focuses on the question of whether we should introduce epistemic virtues unrelated to the democratic procedure (virtues which would consequently be used to evaluate the decisions generated by that procedure) or claim that epistemic virtues reside within the procedure (so that democratic procedures inherently generate epistemically valuable decisions).

2 In the remainder of the article I will use the terms *correct*, *true* and *truth-conducive* as generic expressions representing other epistemic values, constantly referring to the epistemic standpoint that there are epistemic values unrelated to the democratic procedure on the basis of which it is possible to evaluate decisions.

inherently conflicted with the democratic notions of the freedom and equality of all citizens. The privileged treatment of experts would thus seem particularly anti-democratic, being a form of favouring the elite. While, for example, affirmative action and the general privileging of the disenfranchised or the underrepresented are not considered anti-democratic, the privileging of experts can hardly be justified using democratic principles. However, a mere second glance shows that such an initial attitude entails further dilemmas. Namely, the elaboration of the reasoning behind the exclusion of experts from decision-making processes clearly portrays proceduralism as a standpoint willing to sacrifice the epistemic quality of decisions, or, differently worded, their very truthfulness. Specifically, epistemic proceduralists ground their stance on a critique of the standard approach to the epistemic justification of democracy, a viewpoint claiming that democratic processes should generate decisions which can be considered correct from the perspective of some independent standard of epistemic value. This independent standard of assessing democratic decisions is usually defined using the concepts of 'truth' and 'truth-conduciveness' (truth-sensitivity, 'problem solving', 'correctness', 'reliability' or like).

For example, J.J. Rousseau's theory of 'correctness' supports the claim that political decisions are only legitimate if they are correct, and this correctness is assessed on the basis of standards independent of the procedures used to generate the decisions. In other words, according to Rousseau, a political decision must be correct, as we are not supposed to justify it solely by referring to the fact it was generated using a democratic process that included civic discussions or the valid exchange of arguments. Joshua Cohen may have offered a more precise definition of this independent standard of correctness for the assessing the epistemic quality of decisions: he postulated an ideal-decision generated by an ideal democratic procedure (Cohen 1986). This decision would thus become the criterion by which the epistemic value of any subsequent decision generated by a real and concrete procedure ought to be assessed. An outcome generated using an ideal procedure would be considered the independent measure of correctness for the assessment of actual decision-making processes. Even though Cohen's standard does not presuppose realism, or any other metaphysical concept of political truth or truth related to the common good, his ideal procedure specifies the counterfactual conditions of the best possible public debate regarding political issues: the harmonization or democratic decision generated by such a procedure is the best possible decision that can be achieved on the basis of currently available information and arguments. It is thus correct in relation to sub-ideal approximations characteristic of real democratic decision-making processes. Alvin Goldman, unlike the aforementioned authors, approaches this topic from the perspective of (thematically expanded) social epistemology (Goldman 2010). Defending the stance of so-called *reliability democracy*, he singularly states that consensus attained by the

means of just democratic procedures is not automatically worthy of being considered epistemically justified. No aspect of a thus achieved consensus represents an epistemological contribution to democratic theory, in spite of being, of course, politically justified. A rational public debate is only epistemically valuable if it fulfils the condition of reliability or truth-conduciveness.

Proponents of epistemic proceduralism have set forward various objections to such an approach to the justification of democratic decisions, one of the most important being the issue of the role of experts in the decision-making process, usually formulated as the problem of epistocracy. Specifically, the standard approach which assumes that the truth/correctness of a decision constitutes the legitimacy of a democracy, is highly unlikely to avoid the privileging of experts as the best 'guides' to truth/correctness, who thus ought to be entrusted with making decisions. Proceduralists claim that, within a democratic debate, no one, including the experts, should be in any way privileged, as citizens cannot be expected to adhere to the stances of the experts' elite rather than to contribute as equals. The introduction of any independent criterion of assessing the epistemic quality of democratic decisions – be it a criterion of truth, correctness, truth-sensitivity or like – necessarily entails a anti-democratic tendency to favour experts. Epistocracy gives rise to a myriad of further issues, such as the question of opting for the most credible expert within a discordant group, or, differently stated, the problem of resolving disagreements between experts. Such cases raise the question of choosing experts who can pose as arbitrators regarding matters of truth and correctness. Furthermore, certain authors will claim that there are no genuine experts for political and moral topics, as there is no objective and universally accepted expertise that could warrant the formation of such authority (Rawls 1993). It is stated that there is no conceptual relationship between truth and democracy, unlike the one which links, for example, truth and science. Democratic processes are certainly not comparable with the convincing methods of attaining truth in medicine or physics, scientific disciplines that rest of the stances and works of experts. In such cases the demand for accepting the standpoints of experts can only seem reasonable. However, political decisions are not made in a manner reminiscent of scientific seminars. One could possibly alleviate this initial rejection of the existence of experts by choosing to acknowledge their existence and consequent ability to act as guides to correct political decisions, perhaps even claiming that it is possible to select the best among conflicted experts. However, even in such circumstances, the stances of experts cannot be imposed upon those who bear different opinions. This is due to the fact that experts can never be entirely neutral as they have particular interests and preferences which affect their

stances (Estlund 2003, Christiano 2008)<sup>3</sup>. Epistemic proceduralists will conclude this discussion by making a statement essential to their position – in politics, a certain stance can be considered epistemically acceptable regardless of not being true/correct.

The newfound importance of the issue of the epistemic justification of democracy within political philosophy can be largely attributed to the works of Fabienne Peter, whose contribution is best illustrated through her successful connecting of political and epistemological issues, a feat long evaded by many of her colleagues. Particular value can be attributed to her lucid critique of the standard approach, based on the claim that it instrumentalizes the significance of the democratic procedure. Peter holds that its instrumentalization automatically devalues democracy, reducing it to mere means to attaining an alternate goal, such as the production and dissemination of knowledge or true/correct beliefs (Peter 2008). According to Peter, the instrumentalizing nature of the standard approach to the epistemic justification of democracy fails to incorporate the irreducible pluralist value of individual agency and the procedural epistemic value of collective discussions. Furthermore, from Peter's standpoint, an approach which focuses solely on the truth/correctness of the resultant decision necessarily separates the significance of the democratic procedure from the merits of learning, failing to realize that procedural values entail intrinsic epistemic virtue. The same stance, although a bit more minutely elaborated, can be found in Peter's most recent work (Peter 2016).

In short, the proceduralist critiques of the standard approach to epistemic justification have mostly, in a more or less explicit manner, rejected the justification of the inclusion of experts in democratic decision-making, maintaining that democracy can be epistemically justified without the involvement of experts in decision-making processes. Fabienne Peter has undoubtedly offered the best articulation of the proceduralist objection to the inclusion of experts in democratic decision-making. Once I have provided a summary of her argumentation, I will attempt to offer a critical review and elaborate an alternative approach to the democratic and epistemic justifications of including experts in decision-making processes.

## **EPISTEMIC INSTRUMENTALISM AND AUTHORITY DILEMMA**

<sup>3</sup> It is important to note that critics of epistocracy aren't only epistemic proceduralists or those who deny the relevance of epistemic justification. Christiano, for example, supports the standard approach to epistemic justification while remaining critical of epistocracy (Christiano 2012).

Peter distinguishes two kinds of decision making situations: (i) ones in which there are third-person authorities or experts and (ii) others in which there are no third-person authorities or experts. While the first decision making process can not be democratic, the second can be considered as such. It seems that she is here rather consistent with the positions elaborated in her previous works: a democratic decision making process excludes experts. The hidden assumption here is again that politics is an area substantively different from science or other areas in which there are experts. According to Peter, there is a certain intrinsic and insolvable tension between expert decisions-making processes and democratic decision making processes.

The rationale behind the fact that democratic decision making processes exclude experts lies in the thesis that the epistemic value of a democratic decision-making process is not derived from its epistemic outcomes or, differently stated, the correctness/truth of the resultant decisions. On the contrary, the epistemic value of a democratic decision making process lies in the fair and mutually accountable procedure of deliberation. She argues in favour of her thesis, appealing to situations in which adjustments and reasonable disagreements are epistemically valuable solutions, rather than correct outcomes (decisions). According to Peter, the very existence of justified and reasonable disagreement between peers proves that (one) correct or true outcome is not necessarily an epistemically valuable requirement.

Contrary to Peter, I would like to argue here that (i) even if we accept that the sheer privileging experts in the decision making process is not democratic, there is a role for experts in a democratic decision-making process (ii) the epistemic value of a democratic decision making process lies not only in the fair deliberative procedure, but also in the correctness or truth of its outcome (rationality, justification, problem-solving capacity, truth-conductivness or like) and (iii) reasonable disagreement does not exclude the epistemic value of correct or true outcomes but, on the contrary, relies on it.

As a full-blooded proceduralist, Peter builds her stance on the critiques of the standard approach, which presupposes the epistemic value of a true outcome. She ascribes to the standard approach the label of epistemic instrumentalism, that stance that it sacrifices democratic rationale to the epistemic one. More precisely, when writing of epistemic instrumentalism, Peter is referring to: (i) the view that epistemic value is derived from epistemic outcomes, (ii) the view that a correct decision is a desirable epistemic outcome, (iii) the view that the epistemic justification of democracy depends on an epistemically correct outcome. Defined in such a way, epistemic instrumentalism implies that democracy only has instrumental value. Peter claims that many epistemic democrats have, more or less explicitly, embraced the epistemic instrumentalist defence of democracy, arguing that democratic procedure is a good means – or at least a good enough means – for arriving at correct decisions (tracking the truth). They do this by claiming that the diversity of perspectives in

democratic deliberation improves the correctness of the final decision, or that democratic deliberation insures a wider pool of evidence for the final decision, or even that the fairness and inclusiveness of democratic procedures generate the reliability necessary for reaching the truth. In one way or another, all of these approaches sacrifice the intrinsic value of the democratic procedure to the epistemic goal of attaining a correct or truth-conducive decision. In short, according to Peter, the main failure of epistemic instrumentalism lies within the assumption that the epistemic value of decisions is reducible to their correctness or truth-conduciveness.

Expertism is really grounded on the assumption that the epistemic value of democratic deliberation lies in the true/correct outcome (decision). Expertism, in contrast with the aforementioned positions, is really the stance that experts need to have a privileged role in the decision making process because they are, in comparison with other citizens, the most reliable guides to correct or true decisions. If the legitimacy of a decision is in its correctness/truth, there is no reason not to additionally privilege the opinions of experts. For these very reasons, Peter believes that (in spite of the legitimacy of the experts' decision-making process for some purposes and in some circumstances) experts and democratic decision-making cannot be harmonized.

However, if one wanted to reject expertism as non-democratic on such an argument, she would need to ascribe the same label to other non-expertistic stances that designate correct or true decisions as the goal of democratic deliberation. Peter is aware of the fact that the inclusion of epistemic outcomes or correctness/truth into democratic decision-making processes generates the problem of the adjacent role of experts. However, she is also aware that she cannot reject expertism without rejecting non-expertistic stances that claim that democratic fairness or inclusiveness improves the correctness of the final decision. And she did this through her critique of epistemic instrumentalism. In short, Peter's reasoning commences with the premise that the privileging of the opinions of experts introduces illegitimacy into the democratic decision-making process (which needs to be based on freedom and equality) and closes with the conclusion that correctness and truth cannot constitute the epistemic value of democratic decision-making. Consequently, she not only qualifies expertism as non-democratic or instrumentalists' stance, but ascribes this label to an entire spectrum of stances based on the assumption that it is only true decisions which entail epistemic value.

In her most recent article, Peter articulated the problem of epistemic instrumentalism as the authority dilemma (Peter, 2016). If practical authority is justified on epistemic grounds, then legitimate practical authority is non-democratic. If, on the other hand, the practical authority of democracy is to be legitimate, it must be justified on non-epistemic grounds. We can also word it in an alternative manner: in the areas of decision-making where there is third-person epistemic authority, we

can choose to adhere to those who know what the correct decision is, in which case our decision-making is not democratic; if we insist on democratic decision-making, we can't defend the legitimacy of democracy on epistemic grounds, but must defend it on purely practical grounds. So, the defence of democracy characteristic of an epistemic instrumentalist is self-undermining, as the very epistemic circumstances it presupposes are incompatible with democracy, claims Peter.

The problem arises from what the epistemic instrumentalist conception of democratic legitimacy presupposes about epistemic authority, or from what constitutes the epistemic value of a decision-making process: if there is a correct decision to be made, and if someone has legitimate epistemic authority to make claims about what the correct decision is, the epistemic case for democracy crumbles. According to Peter, the only way to sustain both the epistemic and the democratic justification of practical authority is in the rejection of the assumption that the epistemic value of democracy lies in the correct or true outcome. Such a solution, consequently, points toward rejecting the role of experts in a democratic decision-making process.

Instead of epistemic instrumentalism, Peter proposes proceduralism or, more precisely, procedural epistemic value as the alternative to the epistemic value of seeking correct or true outcomes. Her aim is to show that the deliberative democratic procedure itself, i.e. the process of exchanging reasons with others and of adjusting one's beliefs in response to claims made by others, may have epistemic value – above and beyond the value of making correct decisions. She understands this procedural value of democracy as starkly contrasted to the instrumental value of democracy which she had previously criticized.

## EPISTEMIC INSTRUMENTALISM VS POLITICAL INSTRUMENTALISM

Firstly, I can agree with Peter that certain forms of the epistemic justification of democracy sacrifice democratic values to the epistemic value of correctness and truth. For instance, Plato's epistocracy, as the most radical form of instrumentalism, explicitly sacrifices democratic values to the epistemic value of truth. I can also concur with Peter that such an epistocratic approach, focused only on the true outcome, cannot be justified because it ignores the value of democratic procedures as well as the value of the learning process through public deliberation and mutual accountability. However, it would be inappropriate to identify Plato's epistocracy with stances such as, for instance, Goodin's claim that democratic deliberation multiplies the perspectives or the diversity of evidence from which we aim to derive decisions of epistemically higher quality. Goodin surely did not underestimate the epistemic value of collective deliberation, as well as the value of mutual accountability.

Secondly, I agree with Peter's diagnosis of the problem as an authority dilemma: there is a certain conflict between epistemic and democratic justification of political authority, or between political values and epistemic values in the justification of democracy. In the justification of democracy, I coincide with Peter's claim that the tension between the epistemic aim of truth and correctness on one side and of democratic fairness on the other cannot be solved by epistemic instrumentalism because it sacrifices/instrumentalizes democratic values to epistemic values. However, I disagree that focusing on epistemic outcomes (correctness, truth) needs to be eliminated from the epistemic justification of democracy. I also disagree that the introduction of experts is, without exception, impossible to consider democratic. Finally, I disagree that the epistemic justification of democracy should be reduced to democratic procedures (no matter how deliberative and fair they may be). Moreover, I would like to argue that Peter's proceduralist solution is a defence of political instrumentalism, which is an equally inappropriate solution of the authority dilemma as epistemic instrumentalism. In providing arguments for such a stance, I will rely on discussions about epistemic values in social context, recently elaborated in social epistemology.

Allow me a brief digression aimed to introduce the relevance of social epistemology for debates about the epistemic justification of democracy. Social epistemology is a sub-discipline of epistemology which deals with the processes of belief formation, retention and revision of an individual epistemic agent conducted within social interaction. It also deals with the epistemic properties of groups, institutions and social systems (Goldman 1987, 1999, 2010). The epistemic features of democracy, such as its epistemic justification, are consequently also issues elaborated by social epistemology. Social epistemology assumes a certain interdisciplinary philosophical perspective that incorporates epistemology, philosophy of politics, ethics and social philosophy. In the words of one of the most prominent founders of social philosophy, Alvin Goldman, social epistemology is applied epistemology (Goldman 2010) or, using my own phrasing, 'real-world epistemology' (Prijić-Samaržija 2016).

It is important to note here that traditional epistemology makes no reference to practical cognitive issues within the real social world. Its focus was on the acquisition of knowledge in idealized circumstances: individual epistemic agents are perceived as persons of unlimited logical competences, asocial beings isolated from any socio-political context. Truth and rationality are detached from social power or any political dimension of belief formation. The instrumentalist approaches, which Peter continuously relies on, also assume this particular traditional approach to epistemic values. However, these traditional approaches are opposed by the influential reductionist perspective that has been promoted by contemporary movements such as postmodernism, social constructivism, sociology of knowledge and cultural

studies, and which stresses the social aspect of knowing (Rorty 1979, Barnes and Bloor 1982, Foucault 1980, 1991). The reductionist approach proclaimed the death of epistemology, or, more precisely, the traditional epistemic concepts of truth, rationality, justification and so on. Following their claim that beliefs are mere social constructions of power, epistemic investigations need to be reduced exclusively to the deconstruction of beliefs to the social relations of power. ‘Truly’ social epistemology, as the third approach, is positioned somewhere between traditionalist and reductionist extremes (Fricker 1998, 2007). It assumes a social situatedness of knowledge (congruent with the reductionist approach) while maintaining the central epistemic values of traditional epistemology such as truth, rationality, justification or problem-solving (reminiscent of the traditionalists). Epistemic agents form, retain and revise beliefs/judgments/decisions under social influences, but they still need to be evaluated as more-or-less truth-conducive, rational, justified, epistemically successful in problem-solving or like. Decisions are perceived as the product of a more-or-less fair decision making process, but, nevertheless, they also need to be evaluated as more-or-less justified, rational, correct or like.

This brief lesson in social epistemology is useful primarily for the sake of positioning Peter’s proceduralist proposal about the epistemic value of correctness or truth. It is clear that proceduralism appeals to the reductionist stance about truth or correctness. More precisely, in the debate about democratic decision-making situations, Peter’s proceduralism assumes a reductionist approach as she rejects that epistemic value rests in the epistemic outcome, or that there are any valuable and objective epistemic standards (such as correctness or truth) that are independent of the procedure. Moreover, we can label her assumption that epistemic value cannot lie in the true outcome as a certain form of epistemic revisionism<sup>4</sup> due to the complete elimination of fundamental epistemic values (instead of just being relativized or positioned in a sceptical scenario).

However, when trying to position Peter’s stance within the framework of social epistemology, we should not neglect her distinction between situations in which there are third-person authorities and situations in which there are not. Peter does not exclude the relevance of epistemic value of truth in certain situations, but she is suspicious about this value within the realm of politics – an area in which there are no experts. Keeping this in our minds, we have to articulate her position as epistemic

4 Goldman makes a distinction between three approaches to exploring the social dimension of acquiring knowledge: the first is limited to previously mentioned topics within (individual) epistemology that engage the social dimension in a more or less explicit way (*preservationism*), the second expands the realm of social epistemology to include new interdisciplinary areas (*expansionism*) and the third can hardly be considered a legitimate approach to social epistemology as it refutes the fundamental traditional epistemic values (*revisionism*), (Goldman 2010).

revisionism or reductionism only in the domain of political decision-making processes. Consequently, we need to restate our qualification: by claiming that the entire epistemic value of a democratic decision-making process is within a fair and mutually accountable procedure, Peter accepts the reductionist epistemic approach exclusively to the epistemic justification of democracy, rejecting the core assumptions of (both traditional and truly social) epistemology. In her epistemic justification of democracy, traditional epistemic values are replaced with a form of 'democratic procedural epistemic norms'. According to Peter, an epistemically valuable decision is a social fabrication, or the construction of a fair and mutually accountable deliberation process. There are no procedure-free norms of rationality, justification, validity and truth, as epistemic value lies entirely in the fairness of the procedures. In other words, the epistemic value of a decision is completely reduced to the political/democratic value of the procedure that generated that particular decision. It is worth to be mention that Peter does not reduce general epistemic task to the elaboration of the social roots of a decision or on the analysis of the relations of power inherent to the decision-making procedure. She preserves the normative component of epistemic evaluation, that is rejected within reductionist approach. Socially unjust or politically unfair deliberations construct epistemically non-valuable beliefs. Not every construct (belief, decision) of deliberation is epistemic outcome that we only need to register, only constructs derived from fair, inclusive and mutually accountable democratic deliberation can be considered valuable.

In spite of this important aspect of Peter's stance, she nevertheless utilizes the political instead of the epistemic evaluation of decisions in the situation in which there are no third person authorities. Consequently, such a position is just a form of political instrumentalism. Peter's epistemic justification of democracy is not a truly epistemic defence of democratic decision-making outcomes, but rather a defence of political constructivism, formed on the basis of a seriously revised version of epistemology, making her comparable to those who have declared the death of epistemology (in this domain of political decision-making processes). Peter claims that epistemic instrumentalism solves the authority dilemma by reducing democratic values to epistemic values. She, justifiably, criticised such a stance. On the other hand, Peter's proceduralism solves the authority dilemma by reducing epistemic value to democratic/political value. Proceduralism sacrifices the epistemic value of decisions to their political value. Peter's alternative epistemic defence of democracy, which is affected by the authority dilemma, fails to solve this task in a manner similar to the failure of epistemic instrumentalism.

Finally, from the perspective of social epistemology, we can also detect a possible inconsistency. Since such a reductivist epistemic approach is not assumed in situations in which there are third-person authorities, we now have two kinds of epistemological approaches: traditional, for all situations in which there are third-

person authorities, and reductionist, for situations in which there are no third-person authorities. In other words, the epistemic value in some decision-making situations is truth and correctness, but not in others. Even if we could accept her *political* explanation that the epistemic value of truth entails a democratically inappropriate role of experts, we still need an *epistemic* explanation of what makes a democratic deliberation that particular kind of epistemic situation in which a correct outcome is not considered indispensable. She said that democratic deliberation is exceptional because there are no third-person authorities and the epistemic value of truth/correctness is not relevant. If truth/correctness is not problematic in some other discussions, what aspect of this particular kind of deliberation suffices to make us epistemically doubtful about the acquisition of truth? Aside from the politically doubtful role of experts, what is the epistemic reason to exclude the expertise in these deliberation processes? While reductionists reject truth in general, regardless of the situation, Peter develops a kind of dualistic position regarding the epistemic value of truth. Namely, her political instrumentalism does not offer an *epistemic* reason for the rejection of epistemic value of correctness or truth in deliberations in politics, assuming that the political rationale warrants priority.

## HYBRID MODEL

Peter correctly emphasises the fact that the values of democracy and epistemic values can be conflicted: political unfairness can generate epistemic success, but, at the same time, political fairness can generate epistemic culpability. Should we conclude that we need to reject either one or the other, as suggested by the authority dilemma or assume either epistemic or political instrumentalism?

The most commonly discussed cases of political fairness producing epistemic culpability are affirmative action programs. For instance, affirmative action programs of quotas for Afro-Americans at American universities or for women in parliaments are criticized as epistemically unjustified as they can discriminate epistemically more deserving people who lose their deserved positions and, therefore, impose upon them epistemic and ethical/political (economic, educational, etc.) injustice. On the other side, there are situations in which epistemic benefits produce political unfairness, such as the examples of expertism or epistemic paternalism. Since experts are, comparatively, the best guides to truth (or at least to avoiding false beliefs), trusting experts usually results in justified beliefs. However, expertism, in addition to other kinds of epistemic paternalism, is usually seen as anti-democratic due to various reasons (Estlund 2003, 2008, Peter 2008, Kitcher, 2011).

Striving to equally appreciate democratic and epistemic values, we should justify neither epistemic sub-optimality which lead to political fairness nor epistemic

benefits which generate or assume political unfairness. As we have already mentioned above, the veritistic model, responds to the so-called standard approach to epistemic justification of democracy in stressing the importance of epistemic outcomes. According to this model, epistemic success is the sole necessary condition for approval, making it unacceptable to sacrifice epistemic goals in order to achieve political fairness. On the other side, sacrificing political fairness for the sake of epistemic success can be justified in certain cases. As we have previously seen, this model generates epistemic instrumentalism on the basis of the traditional approach to epistemic values. In the veritistic model, while affirmative action programs are never justified, some forms of expertism or epistemic paternalism could be considered just. The second paradigm is the proceduralist model that focuses primarily on political fairness. As political fairness is necessary for approval, it is acceptable to sacrifice epistemic success in order to insure political fairness. A situation in which political unfairness is conducive to epistemic success is completely unacceptable. We have also seen that proceduralism leads to political instrumentalism based on the reductivist or revisionist approach to epistemic values. In the proceduralist model, while affirmative action programs could be justified, no form of expertism or epistemic paternalism could ever be considered just.

However, I would like to plead here for a certain hybrid model. While veritism and proceduralism make clear value priorities regardless of the situation in question, deducing their assessment from the principled choice provided by the authority dilemma, the hybrid model insists on the specific assessment of both political and epistemic outcomes in real situations, going as far as to plead for certain 'trade-off' procedures. The hybrid model, on the basis of truly social epistemology, emphasises the necessary harmonization of epistemic and political values within a concrete real-world context. In the case of affirmative action, instead of simply deducing its critique or apology from the principles of veritism or proceduralism, we need a more comprehensive analysis of the concrete and long-term epistemic and political outcomes. Namely, the actions which may result in an instantaneous epistemically sub-optimal outcome can be justified if there is reasonable probability that they will produce better epistemic results within a longer period. Programs of affirmative action can slow down or reduce the possible or direct epistemic outcome but, at the same time, can be epistemically more valuable as long as they are likely to improve the long-term epistemic capacities of producing correct outcomes. Moreover, the fact that these programs preserve and insure fairness creates a situation in which both values are properly harmonized. So, the hybrid model can justify affirmative action programs, as long as we assume the epistemic values of truth or correctness. Hybrid model deals with the question of the role of experts in the democratic decision-making process in a similar manner, seeking for a specific harmonization of values. In the particular case of expertism, we could attempt to harmonize the epistemic and

the political by introducing a division of epistemic labour. A good example has been offered by Thomas Christiano or Philip Kitcher. Decisions about social/political priorities need to be left to citizens, but decisions about the methods of attaining these goals ought to be left to experts (Christiano 2012). In deliberating, decisions about the nature of the important issues can be tackled by citizens, while experts can contribute through various forms of participation (tutorials, supervision, education, representation of the weak or un-present, etc.), (Kitcher 2011). The democratic desiderata can be preserved by the *qualified* deference of citizens to experts. Trust in experts needs to be based on relevant evidence/rationale affirming the experts' trustworthiness, and on democratic mechanisms of attaining consensus about the experts' trustworthiness (Prijic-Samaržija 2016). Trust in epistemic authorities thus in no way necessarily violates both the epistemic and the political autonomy of each citizen, but appears to be rational and grounded on democratic principles (Zagzebski 2012).

The harmonization of values in the hybrid model tends to achieve the optimum balance of both epistemic and political values in each particular situation (not the abstract and absolute political or epistemic values in all possible situations). 'Trade-off' scenarios assume the sacrifice of absolute values of either truth or fairness for the sake of the hybrid values, or, differently worded, for the best possible balance of both epistemic and political values. Unqualified epistemic paternalism of experts cannot be justified in any 'trade-off' scenario: there is no epistemic benefit that can be justified by such a blatant example of a non-democratic procedure. At the same time the unqualified rejection of the role of experts cannot be justified: there is no real political benefit that needs to be grounded on the rejection of the epistemic value of correct or true outcomes.

While veritism relies on traditionalism and proceduralism rests on reductionism, the hybrid model assumes the stance of truly social epistemology (Fricker 1998). Within the hybrid model, normativity is disconnected from the concept of the apolitical value of truth and is instead bound to the idea that the processes of forming true beliefs are socially situated. Consequently, contrary to both traditionalism and reductivism, the hybrid model searches for true-belief formation processes that are reliably democratic in nature.

## REASONABLE DISAGREEMENTS AND THE PROCEDURALISM

Peter finds the foundation of her thesis that correctness/truth need not be the desirable epistemic value in the epistemology of disagreement, or, more precisely, in the 'opacity stance' presented by prominent authors who defend reasonable disagreement (Sosa 2010, Goldman 2010, Peter 2013a, 2013b). The epistemology of

disagreement shows that, in certain circumstances of persistent disagreement between two parties/peers (in which there is no third-person authority which can resolve the disagreement), the epistemic agents have a reason to engage in deliberation with each other, adjust their beliefs in relation to each other and, finally, stay in reasonable disagreement. Peter holds that the existence of justified reasonable disagreement (in which both sides hold onto their conflicted beliefs) shows that the procedure of mutual accountability is epistemically valuable procedure *per se* and that epistemic value thus does not lie in the procedure-independent correct outcome.<sup>5</sup>

Firstly, it has to be mentioned here that the defence of reasonable disagreement within debates in epistemology of disagreement come, without exception, from authors that, unlike Peter, prefer the traditional approach to epistemology which undoubtedly portray truth as the central and general epistemic value. The debates within epistemology of disagreement are focused on the particular problem of resolving situations in which the desirable correct or true outcome is impossible to attain. Offering reasonable disagreement as the only solution, no one taking part in the debate would want to defend any substitution for truth. On the contrary, the participants would unanimously try to divulge an appropriate solution or explanation, given that it is not possible to attain an outcome that can be correct at this particular point in the discussion.

<sup>5</sup> In *Democratic Legitimacy* (2008), Fabienne Peter had defended strict epistemic proceduralism, but later (2013a, 2013b) chose to opt for a more balanced stance, stressing that epistemic value cannot be fully reduced to the truthfulness/correctness of the results. She creatively based her softened stance on discussions pertaining to reasonable disagreements, an issue which has been continuously gaining momentum. Epistemological debates about disagreement are predominantly focused on the question of whether participants in a discussion with access to the same evidence (assuming that they are at comparable levels of expertise) can ever justifiably hold different stances. On one hand, certain philosophers clam that reasonable disagreement between peers who share all evidence cannot be possible, as either only one is right or both ought to suspend their beliefs (Christensen 2007, Elga 2007, 2010, Feldman 2007). On the other hand, others hold that there is a variety of reasons allowing for reasonable disagreement, with particular importance being attributed to the fact that two experts can never perceive the same evidence in entirely identical ways – it could be they did not have access to it at the same time or failed to perceive it as equally relevant. It is also possible that the evidence is simply interpreted differently in terms of different systems or knowledge or that the experts utilize different epistemic norms for legitimizing the data (Sosa 2010, Goldman 2010). Peter is particular to Sosa's and Goldman's stance about the possibility of reasonable disagreement, a standpoint known as the *Opacity View*. According to Peter, the very possibility of reasonable disagreement illustrates that it is possible to simultaneously deal with different, yet epistemically high-quality stances, regardless of being unable to assume that both of them are true/correct, as two different stances can never be equally true/correct. She concludes that the truthfulness of the outcome of a discussion *is* epistemically valuable, but maintains her stance that epistemic value cannot be decided without taking into account the epistemic value of the procedure used to reach the decision (Peter 2013a, Peter 2013b). Now, we can see that she offers additional explanations of her viewpoint, claiming that situations lacking a third-person authority capable of resolving the disagreement prove that the epistemic value of a true outcome can be substituted by the epistemic value of mutual respect (Peter 2016).

Secondly, we need to register that the situations of persistent disagreement are always perceived as clear cases of epistemic dissonance, rather than as a desirable epistemic solution (Zagzebski 2012). Adjustments and reasonable disagreements are sub-optimal epistemic solutions in situations in which accurate beliefs are not possible to attain (yet). The mutual accountability contained in the adjustment practices or in the reasonable disagreement itself is not primarily the demonstration of the epistemic values of fairness (that are dissociated from correct outcomes). This epistemic ‘tolerance’ and ‘pluralism’ doesn’t arise from the fact that both parties accept that there is no correct epistemic outcome or that the shared evidence permits different beliefs, but from the fact that *at this very moment* the shared evidence is not sufficient to attain a desirable common epistemic outcome (as exemplified by the Equal Weight View or the Steadfast view) or from the fact that *principally* all relevant evidence cannot be fully accessed and shared by both parties (Opacity view).

So, the existence and justification of reasonable disagreement neither prove nor illustrate the existence of situations in which the epistemic value of attaining correct or true outcomes can be rejected or replaced by the epistemic value of mutual accountability. On the contrary, it is based on the assumption that truth is the ultimate epistemic value – but that there are situations in which an agreement is (for different reasons) not possible to attain. It is fundamentally different from Peter’s proceduralist claim that in all situations lacking third-person authorities who can solve the disagreement, we ought to reject the value of truth and replace it with some other epistemic value (such as mutual accountability).

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