

Global Democracy: to Be or Not to Be?

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Raffaele Marchetti, *Global Democracy: For and Against. Ethical Theory, Institutional Design, and Social Struggles*, New York, London: Routledge, 2008.

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In the 212 pages of his book, Marchetti, Adjunct Professor in International Relations at the Faculty of Political Sciences and Center for Ethics and Global Politics at LUISS University Rome, fights for proving that global democracy is the key concept which perfectly describes the attempt to build a world where civil participation is the core of *raison d'être* for international institutions. Structured in four parts, eight chapters (including conclusions), bibliography and index, the work tries to ordinate all the important academic contributions concerning democracy beyond national borders from the beginning of the 70's until nowadays. In fact, this is the first impression that guides you through the pages; as you are reaching the last pages, you realize you are mistaken. This *errance* through the labyrinth of theories specific to national and international democratic theory represents, in fact, a pretext to underline the innovative spirit of his scientific project. The four parts could resemble a Western movie scene: “the setting” (the first part), “the good guy” (the second part), “the bad guy” (the third part) and “the victory of the good guy who becomes aware that the fight has just begun” (the fourth part).

The research proposed by the author is built in the area of international political theory which is rather interpreted through the global ethical eye. In other words, it is an attempt to criticize and find solutions for that international category subjected to political exclusion: the international social movements to whom no international governmental actor offers the

possibility to express themselves. From this point of view, the international project needs to be considered a cosmopolitan one, in its very Kantian sense, after being “purified” by two filters: vulnerability and responsibility. What can we do in order to decrease the vulnerability of those who are not represented and to increase the responsibility of those who should ensure the representation of all the important international social categories? In other words, who are the *choice-makers* and who are the *choice-bearers*?

In the first part, *Globalization and the Democratic Deficit*, the author establishes the theoretical and pragmatic context in which global democracy has evolved. This means that this almost new concept in the theory of democracy is the result of the new reality. Globalization, with its fastest inter-relations, media, links, new communication and, implicitly, with its new problems (important waves of migration, diseases, green issues, etc.) requires new political concepts to encapsulate its new meanings. The classical theory of democracy underlines the necessity of having specific national elements: citizenship, participation, institutions, theory which faces the impossibility of not answering to basic demands such as inclusion. Yet, the assumption which generates Marchetti’s work is the presence of democratic deficit at the local/ national and global level, although the distinction between the two is not the same as it once was. On the contrary, national decisions may reverberate at the global level and vice versa (p. 17).

The second part shapes the body of global democracy from three points of view: an ethical, institutional, and social one. The second chapter provides an analysis of the *global democracy* from the perspective of *ethical theory – the all-inclusiveness cosmopolitanism* as a result of consequentialist and cosmopolitan theories: the consequentialist cosmopolitanism. From the mix between the ideas that good precedes the right (the consequentialist theory) and that justice must be made without discrimination to all citizens of the world (the cosmopolitan theory), results a third one: Justice should be understood as an universal instrument used to assure the freedom of individual choice for the maximization of all men’s well-being.

Who can say what is good for a person better than the person itself?

The third chapter is based primarily and essentially on how the institutional machine should work, in order to assure one of the most elementary presuppositions of democracy: participation and the participation of choice-bearers, to be more precise. In fact, the fundamental presuppositions subscribed in the text are that, in a real democracy, the choice-bearers have the right to participate to public life, they do so and can become the free choice-makers. Consequently, how should the institutional design of international order look like so as to be closer to the ideal model of democracy? It seems that the solution consists in a multi-layered institutional framework for maximizing the inclusion of those “under-included” (who should, but do not take part in it) regarded as collective agents and not as single persons. From the cosmopolitan democracy perspective, each layer of institutions has its dominant actor (states, international organizations, etc.) and the layers are disproportionately important. To be more precise, for the well-being of individuals, the state must give up on some of its attributes for the supranational institutions. From here there is only one step left to the creation of global demos with its global civil society and its global public opinion – soon, people will discover that they are not as different as they thought; on the contrary, their worries are subscribed to global problems which have only global solutions.

In the last chapter of the second part, we find out what social cosmopolitanism means; this is a model which combines “place-basedness”, “participation”, “autonomy”, “diversity” and “solidarity” (using the author’s words: “unity within locally rooted diversity”: p. 102) in the name of the excluded people of the world. It is an ideal model on how global politics should be done and, at the same time, a manifesto against immorality, the lack of concern for the suffering ones and support for the reconfiguration of a more democratic international space.

The presentation of main theories which are in opposition to the global democracy theory builds up the third part. *De facto*, primarily, Marchetti describes in an extremely rigorous manner what international realists, the nationalists and the

civilizationists sustain and why it is impossible, from their point of view, to agree to the legitimating of a global justice. Secondly, using the same method, the author demonstrates that democratic peace and global governance theories, detached from the liberal internationalism core accuse the idealism of global democracy in imagining a world capable of guaranteeing the inclusion of all citizens.

In the end, global democracy can become reality only through the consolidation of what the author calls “cosmo-federalism”, the new governing design of the United Nations. Thus, this governmental international organization must be reformed so as to achieve a constraining capacity over the states and, as a consequence, to be able to solve the global problems. Still, this remains impossible without an initial background of democratic states prepared to give up on a part of their sovereignty.

Marchetti’s book deserves at least two compliments – one regarding the content issue and the other one concerning the formal aspects of the text. The first compliment consists in recognizing the value of such an attempt to put in order the vast number of texts and authors who directly or indirectly touched the national or global democratic fields. The second one points to the extreme accuracy of the text organization which is emblematic for the Anglo-Saxon model of writing. Starting, in an almost obsessive manner, with the declared purposes of the book, continuing with the announced thesis at the beginning of each part and chapter or the conclusion at the end of each of them reveal the author’s concern to assure the reader that each argument and idea plays its significant part in the text.

Similarly, in order to maintain the balance of impartiality, I would say that Marchetti’s work must also face some criticisms. One of the weaknesses of the book consists in the lack of accuracy between its title and contents. Therefore, *Global democracy: For and Against* would normally let us think of a debate with pros and cons having a single spectator: Raffaele Marchetti. Practically, as we reach the end of the book, the thought of a more appropriate title that should, perhaps, replace the author’s choice becomes stronger: “Global democracy: For and against. For”. He does not only present theories which

are opposite to what global democracy means, but, simultaneously, he tries to convince the reader that there is no point in attacking his point of view, as he has an answer to all sceptics.

The second observation relies on the international system as imagined by Marchetti and other cosmopolitans. Global democracy theorists imagine a world where everybody, be they rich or poor, black or white, liberal, conservative or socialist must express themselves. Or, too much stress on participation as the first step towards the solving of problems seems rather naive and cynical. The most important benefits of democracy should be what 'to demand through participation' and not 'to participate for the sake of participation'.

Last, but not least, the author admits that consequentialist cosmopolitanism is only a solution for global problems, national problems being the concern of states while the regional ones should be dealt with by regional actors, etc. The question that inevitably arises is: "Which problems are strictly global and which are strictly national or regional, as long as globalization erases the boundaries between local, national and regional and everything becomes international?"

Nevertheless, Raffaele Marchetti's *Global Democracy: For and Against* is noteworthy research in the field of international political theory and, due to its visionary implications, possibly a starting point for a future model of an international institutional edifice.

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