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ABSTRACT: *Jeffrey Friedman's* Power Without Knowledge *provides not only a critique of technocracy but a compelling story about the intimate relationship between three of today's most important political phenomena: populism, technocracy, and democracy. In contrast to many recent accounts that treat populism as a backlash against technocracy, Friedman's theory suggests that populism is a lineal descendent of technocracy, with which it shares substantial intellectual DNA. Friedman's implicit theory of populism helps to explain many of its core features, including its political stances, emotionality, and hostility to mediating institutions, in interpretively charitable ways. Central to Friedman's analysis is the importance of political epistemology, which supplies key connective tissue between the three phenomena. The relations between technocracy, democracy, and populism revealed by Friedman's theory generate both enlightening and disturbing implications for democratic theory.*

Keywords: *populism; technocracy; democracy; democratic theory; bad intentions; naïve technocratic realism; citizen-technocrats; participation; political epistemology.*

Perhaps the greatest irony of Jeffrey Friedman's book, *Power Without Knowledge* (Oxford University Press, 2019), is that it provides a powerful lens for understanding contemporary politics in the United States, and

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elsewhere, despite one of its central claims being that the social world is too complex for any individual to comprehend well. In modern conditions, Friedman argues, we are left to interpret the great buzzing confusion of the world as best we can within our necessarily incomplete (and thus partly obfuscatory) webs of belief. Nonetheless, if we combine Friedman's discussions of (1) technocracy as a political ideology, (2) naïve technocratic realism, and (3) the bad-intentions heuristic, we have something approximating a working model of populism that makes sense of some major elements of contemporary politics. This model has challenging implications for democratic theory, as it suggests that technocracy is a lineal descendent of—and, perhaps, a de facto successor to—democracy.

Understanding Populism Through Political Epistemology

Friedman has written perhaps the most insightful book on populism that I have yet seen, despite not setting out to do so. Populism is explicitly discussed across only seven pages (in the Introduction), yet it can be found between the lines in almost every chapter, with clusters around some of the most important topics of the book. Technocracy, as Friedman portrays it, leads to populism as a natural result of, *not* as a backlash against, the politics that technocratic legitimacy generates—because technocracy interacts with naïve technocratic realism and the resulting bad-intentions heuristic. Naïve realism and the bad-intentions heuristic, in turn, are simplistic ways of dealing with the technocratic responsibilities that devolve to citizens in what Friedman calls a democratic technocracy. Together, naïve realism and the bad-intentions heuristic constitute a primitive technocratic "political epistemology"—not, of course, in the sense of the scholarly study or theory of political knowledge, but in the sense of a set of interlocking assumptions about the availability to citizens and politicians of the knowledge required for them to fulfill their roles in a technocratic regime.

This understanding of populism goes beyond the usual accounts because it elucidates the specific hermeneutical or, in Friedman's terms, "ideational" mechanisms underlying populist politics. It does this by delving beneath the superficial features of populism, such as democratic erosion, exclusionary rhetoric, and the inhumane treatment of disfavored groups, which understandably occupy popular and scholarly attention. This political-epistemological approach also differs from other ideational

approaches that seek to capture the essence of populism in a definition, or taxonomically, by means of a set of necessary and sufficient conditions (Mudde 2017). Instead, it illuminates the interpretations of the world and the normative presuppositions that drive populist politics from inside populist citizens' heads.

This last notion, that *ideas* drive populist politics, requires some brief unpacking that will help introduce three of Friedman's key methodological assumptions or commitments: ideational determinism, ideational heterogeneity, and interpretive charity.

Friedman assumes that human actions, like all empirical phenomena, are determined and thus are, *in principle*, predictable, even though in practice, such prediction is difficult, to say the least. For Friedman, it is not class or group identity as such that determines our behavior so much as it is our ideas. Understanding why Napoleon invaded Russia requires not just looking at the objective situation he faced in 1812, but also, and primarily, looking at his own *interpretation* of his situation. This is ideational determinism. Thus, Friedman posits intellectual history in a very broad sense—encompassing genealogies of ordinary people's interpretations of their situations, not just the interpretations of "intellectuals"—as the key to understanding their actions.

However, for Friedman, the trouble that historians have in identifying the ideas that led to the actions of a Napoleon is multiplied enormously when attempting to identify the ideas behind the actions of millions. One of Friedman's key insights is to insist on a truth universally acknowledged but rarely remembered: that people have widely varying and idiosyncratic understandings of the world around them. This is the assumption of ideational heterogeneity. Neglect of this important truth explains, according to him, the inscrutability of so many of the actions of others.

If we are to begin to grasp why someone acted a particular way, then, we must engage in an act of profound and thoroughgoing interpretive charity. We must take up, as best we can, their perspective, as alien as it may often be to us, and seek an explanation of their action that makes good sense in terms of their ideas, and not necessarily our own. Thus, to claim that ideas drive populism, as Friedman's analysis allows us to do, is not to assert an untenable idealism but rather to acknowledge the decisive empirical role that people's ideas about the world play in determining their behavior—in particular, in the case of politics, their interpretations of how society works and how it *should* work.

The normative side of *Power Without Knowledge* consists of an attempt to work through, in interpretively charitable ways, the implications of ideational determinism and ideational heterogeneity for the legitimacy of the technocratic enterprise. In brief, the question is how likely we are to achieve an intellectually charitable understanding of others in the mass societies governed by technocracy. This fundamental problem is set forth in Part I. Part II asks how the experts and "citizen-technocrats" of our day deal with this problem. In the final chapter of Part II, turning from experts to citizen-technocrats, Friedman sets out the simplistic technocratic presuppositions that lead to populism.

Populism and Technocracy, a Familial Relation

Technocracy is generally defined as rule by "experts"—those with special knowledge, such as scientists. Though the idea of rule by those who know is very old, technocracy as we know it—and, I would argue, technocracy as a *political* force and ideology today—are not. The contemporary notion of technocracy is the product of the politics of the early twentieth century, during which reform (or, rather, Reform) swept the emerging mass democracies of North America and Europe. As a political force in the United States, technocracy emerged in opposition to, and as a solvent for, the corruption of clientelistic systems of mass politics, especially urban machines, but also that of political parties and party government in general (Buenker 1988). This history matters because technocracy was once a fighting creed, and this creedal history has left indelible impressions that continue to shape politics today. Friedman's analysis reveals the *politics* that technocracy has made and continues to make in the United States. And I contend that part of the politics that technocracy has made is, in fact, contemporary populism (at least in the United States).

Thus, I suspect that Friedman's analysis reveals the true origin of populism, but not in the sense that previous analyses have suggested. Other analysts have juxtaposed populism and technocracy, often in almost Manichean terms. Jan-Werner Müller (2016) conceives them as "mirror images of each other," where technocracy sees there only being one correct policy and populism as there being only one authentic popular will. Likewise, Vivien Schmidt (2006) spots a tension between technocracy as "policy without politics" and populism as "politics without policy." Such neat formulations fail to account for the

complex ways populism and technocracy are intertwined, both in real politics—observe Ecuador's Rafael Correa being called a "technocratic populist"—and conceptually, as I outline below. These accounts of their relationship may therefore obscure more than they enlighten.

Perhaps the most common understanding of the relationship between populism and technocracy is as a kind of *backlash*. In this view, excessive technocratic manipulation has triggered an outpouring of demotic energy opposed to experts and elites of all stripes. Friedman's theory suggests that this understanding is almost precisely backward. Rather than populism being a reaction to technocracy, it is instead an *outgrowth* of it: a working out, in politics, of the logic of technocratic legitimacy in the presence of naïve technocratic realism and the bad-intentions heuristic. Thus, while backlash theorists are probably right to say that dissatisfaction with incumbent democratic elites and institutions is fueled by their failure to fulfill expectations, Friedman's theory invites us to consider where those expectations come from. I suggest they are essentially technocratic expectations, shaped by the understandings of the proper role of government bequeathed to us from the era of Progressive reform.

The key theoretical move that unlocks this insight is the definition of technocracy not as government by experts but rather as a *political ideology* that legitimates power on the basis of solving social problems. Friedman's switch from defining technocracy in terms of who rules to the aims of the regime illuminates technocracy as an ideology with an identifiable lineage in the history of political thought.

Thinking of technocracy as a political ideology reveals that in contemporary politics, citizens often judge the legitimacy of their government by the standard of whether it solves problems. The essential point is that populists interpret the persistence of social problems as a manifestation of the failure of government to discharge its most fundamental duty. So when serious problems are not solved, citizens are not just disappointed—their belief in the legitimacy of their regime is shaken. This is why populism leads to democratic erosion. Populism draws on wells of dissatisfaction with democracy *as a regime,* not because of a rejection of democratic values like equality and popular rule, but because democratic ideology, for a vast swath of citizens, has developed into a technocratic ideology that has little to do with such values as equality and popular rule. Democracy's aim of "doing the people's will" has become "solving the people's problems": that has become the central and proper task of government. This transformation is the product of

the politics of Progressive reform, which reimagined the purpose of the state in an activist mold. Once we conceive of the state as a problem solver, what could be more natural than to conceive of the will of the people in terms of an ever-present directive to solve their problems?

However, technocracy as an ideology does not, on its own, explain the phenomenon of populism. We might, after all, believe in technocratic legitimacy while also recognizing that the persistence of social problems is due to a variety of factors, such as the difficulty of the problems. This brings us to the role of naïve realism and the bad-intentions heuristic as key elements of populism.

What Friedman calls "naïve technocratic realism" is the view that the solutions to social problems are self-evident (25). This is a variant of the more general epistemological phenomenon of naïve realism, which consists in assuming that one's opinions are direct reflections of reality (37-38). The implication is that one sees things as they truly are, as if they have been revealed by pure common sense. Naïvely realistic technocratic citizens come to believe that either their own views about how to solve problems are self-evidently true (first-person naïve realism) or that someone else's views—such as a leader's—are self-evidently true (third-person naïve realism).

Naïve technocratic realism functions as less of a necessary condition for populist leanings than as a source of susceptibility to them. Insofar as citizens see public problems as admitting of simple, straightforward solutions, they will tend to struggle to understand why social problems persist. If a simple fix is all that is needed, why isn't it administered? The most natural answer to this question brings us to the bad-intentions heuristic: "Given a simple society, the persistence, and perhaps even the existence, of social problems is most easily explained by the resistance to change of political actors with bad intentions, who must be overcome by uniting good intentions with a strong will" (292). Problems fester because powerful actors, animated by nefarious motives, resist solving them. This simple heuristic seems to explain why populists are likely to blame the persistence of problems on the incumbent class of elites. Once we've neglected the possibility that the world in its complexity and stubbornness might throw up formidable and sometimes insuperable barriers to solving problems, or that some solutions create new problems as unintended consequences, where else would blame for persistent problems lie but with those with their hands on the levers of power?

Alternative Theories of Populism and Technocracy

This rough theory of populism clarifies numerous elements of the phenomenon observed by other scholars. Christopher Bickerton and Carlo Invernizzi Accetti (2017), for instance, argue for a purely conceptual connection between technocracy and populism based on a shared opposition to party democracy. This theory misses the fact that in much actual political contestation, the jousting between parties concerns precisely their ability to solve problems and their alternative approaches to doing so. Friedman's definition of technocracy, according to which popular politics can itself be technocratic, draws our attention to this kind of contestation. At the same time, real-world populists do not seem to have any problem working with or through political parties so long as they are controlled by populists—rather than by the "elites" who, it is thought, fail to solve, or may even cause, the people's problems. Moreover, parties generally try to define their coalitions as virtuous and deserving of power and respect, sharing a core populist claim to represent the "real" people, those deserving of political power because they are not tainted by malign intentions.

If party democracy were truly at odds with populism (and with technocracy), these important continuities would be hard to explain. If, instead, we recognize a lineal relationship between technocracy and populism, much becomes clear. Their shared disdain for party democracy makes sense in almost the mode of a family tradition: they both oppose it —under certain circumstances—but for rather different reasons. Both dislike the untidiness of reasonable disagreement inherent in the *plurality* of parties, but technocrats do so because it unsettles confidence in their policy solutions, while populists think it signals that those in the other party—or even in all the parties—are working to obstruct the solving of the people's problems.

Nadia Urbinati (2019) articulates a broader version of Bickerton and Accetti's view. As she sees it, populist movements oppose not only political parties but other mediating institutions as well, such as the news media and civil society groups, on the grounds that these institutions interfere with the direct, plebiscitarian connection between the populist leader and the people. The technocratic theory of populism suggests a different analysis. Rather than opposing intermediary institutions in order to embody a quasi-spiritual connection with the leader, populists

might do so on pragmatic grounds if these institutions are seen as obstructing the solving of problems. When a populist leader inveighs against the media or another party, it is invariably on the grounds that journalists or opposition politicians are trying to block the leader's agenda, which (at least ostensibly) aims to solve the people's problems. The sin of mediating institutions is thus not interfering with the mystical communion between the leader and the people but instead preventing the leader from smoothly cleaving the Gordian knot of the country's problems.

The difference here is subtle but important, since many commentators have puzzled over the intensity of support for populist leaders who often lack any semblance of charisma (Pappas 2016, 381-83). When "social problems" are seen as the focal point of the relationship between the leader and the people, their connection is solidified by means of a narrative of shared journey toward a polity that works for ordinary people, not nefarious elites. The frequent speciousness of this rhetoric should not lead us to dismiss the ideational importance of opposition to intermediary institutions for pragmatic (technocratic) reasons rather than outright plebiscitarian ones.

Non-Technocratic Accounts of Populism

One of the most common theories of the origin of populism is the economic anxiety account, which explains the endorsement of populism as a natural if regrettable reaction to objective social conditions, such as the decline of middle-class economic mobility and the rise of social and economic inequality. The problem with this approach has been that it fails to connect the social conditions that it supposes to be the ultimate roots of populism with the actual conscious endorsement of populist leaders (Hawkins, Read, and Pauwels 2017). It thereby neglects the ideas that drive populist supporters, substituting an interpretively uncharitable understanding of them as an economically traumatized mass whose members are stripped, as individuals, of agency. Theories that point to economic anxiety without working out in detail the connection between economic conditions and anxiety and, in turn, between anxiety and support for populism threaten to open up (or widen) a gulf of incomprehensibility between those attracted to populism and those repelled by it.

In the model I am ascribing to Friedman, by contrast, populism is a logical outcome of technocratic ideology in the presence—in the minds of citizens—of a particular type of political epistemology. Thus, one cannot understand populism, at least not in the minds of those who are susceptible to it, without an understanding of the epistemology they bring to politics. Friedman's central methodological claim is that when we attempt to understand the behavior of masses of social and economic actors in response to technocratic governance, but without respectful attention to the ideas that motivate their actions, we are bound to go wrong (to some extent). Thus, we need to be explicit political epistemologists, and sometimes—as when discussing a fundamentally epistemic project, such as technocratic governance—the object of our analysis will be others' tacit political epistemologies. In contrast, analyses of populism that reduce it to anxiety and other emotions, such as anger and resentment, fail to explain why such intense emotions might follow from citizens' political ideas. Even when commentators identify real social problems experienced by those who support populist movements, they do not explain (with interpretive charity) the reasonableness of the emotions the problems trigger by exploring the ideas about the causes of these problems that give rise to these emotions. Instead, analysts have tended to psychologize populists, seeing their emotions as essentially knee-jerk reactions rather than reasonable responses to the world as they see it. Friedman methodologically impels us to look for the latter type of explanation, and his idea-focused political epistemology provides us a framework and toolbox for understanding the actions of others in these terms.

Thus, Friedman's analysis helps illuminate one of the most difficult-to-understand features of populism: the depth, thoroughgoingness, and, in particular, the anger of its rejection of the status quo and its constitutional and legal niceties. It is often thought that the mere persistence of problems just doesn't justify such anger and rejection. Perhaps those expressing this thought are more aware than populists are of the difficulties of all policy making, especially in the veto-laden American context, and so can think of many reasons for problems to continue other than political elites' malevolence. This is why Friedman's insights about naïve realism and the bad-intentions heuristic are so useful; they explain the anger of populists in an interpretively charitable way, making sense of it in light of their fundamental interpretations of the world. If we can think of no other explanation for festering problems that afflict the lives of one's fellow citizens

and community but the bad intentions of those with political power, anger seems like an apt response.

The similarity between doing the people's will and solving their problems can help us understand another form of confusion sparked by populism. When some observers of populism look at the world around them, they see challenges but not an insuperable "swamp" that sinks every effort to meet them. For this group, there is little reason for burning it all down. Yet it is this perspective, which does not even see a systemic problem, that is itself the problem, in a way. It indicates the vast interpretive gulf between populist and non-populist technocrats, a gulf that makes the behavior and beliefs of those on the other side incomprehensible. One group thinks the system works only if it solves problems, but sees a host of problems persisting, and the other thinks that the system *is* solving problems, even some of the most pressing problems in the world, and is democratically legitimate to boot. But where many analyses in the U.S. context chalk this gulf up to polarization, Friedman suggests that it runs deeper than raw partisanship. It goes to the fundamental technocratic ideology of a considerable share of citizens, as well as differences in political epistemology among them. This is one of the core lessons of *Power Without Knowledge*: that mutual incomprehension is often a function of the heterogeneous ideas, including the varying political epistemologies, of citizens, which require independent attention as a topic of analysis. Psychologizing citizens as mindlessly tribal leaves in place gulfs of incomprehension.

The nature of mutual misunderstanding, in this case, may turn out to be a family squabble within the technocratic paradigm about *whose* problems matter, and thus about whether existing elites and institutions are solving them. Those who generally see things getting better often take a global perspective and see the relative peace and reduction of intense poverty in the past few decades as the product of a fundamentally successful international order, including especially the national-level elites and institutions that work to perpetuate that order (e.g., Pinker 2018). For these individuals, we should properly recognize the alleviation of extreme poverty as success in addressing an extremely significant global problem, and so credit, in the form of technocratic legitimacy, ought to redound to everyone involved, particularly incumbent elites. Moreover, we might think that problems like extreme poverty, even if they are found in other parts of the world, have a moral priority over the "first-world problems" of those who live in developed societies.

Interpreted this way, "establishment" institutions take on substantial technocratic legitimacy.

Thus, neither side in the debates about whether the resurgence of nationalism is worrisome are being irrational in the context of their own beliefs and epistemologies. Friedman (24) offers good reasons to expect local leaders to have special concern for local people and their problems (although he does not approve of this tendency), just as there are good reasons to prioritize particularly acute suffering even if its victims live far away. Thus, populists care—not unreasonably, given their upbringing in nationalist cultures—about solving "our" problems, while more globally oriented technocrats care about solving *the biggest* problems in the world, even if they don't afflict the techocrats' own conationals.

Together, then, the assumption that solving social and economic problems is the test of political legitimacy, and the assumption that the persistence of problems means that those in charge are malevolent, constitute the ideological building blocks of populism. When these two assumptions are combined, we have the ideational building blocks for the core stances, emotionality, and opposition to mediating institutions associated with populism. Moreover, this interpretation of populism provides a lens for understanding populist politics in an interpretively charitable way rather than rejecting it, as many critics do, as the unthinking reflex of an irrational mob.

A Lens for Contemporary Politics

Friedman's approach in *Power Without Knowledge* makes interpretively charitable sense not only of populist anger and resentment, but also of many fixtures of political rhetoric, strategy, and reaction that are not usually seen as being particularly populist (Friedman 2019b).

If we live in a technocracy rather than a democracy, it would explain why even non-populist politicians and ordinary citizens emphasize the importance of elected officials "getting things done," which constitutes one of the most pervasive tropes in modern campaign rhetoric. The simple boast of a candidate that she can get things done is, on reflection, a bit silly, since it does not specify whether the things to be done are negative or positive—policy disasters or policy coups. Yet it makes sense for those imbued with naïve technocratic realism. For them, "getting things done" is positive because—so long as the politician has good intentions—

what gets done is bound be positive, as it is likely to solve problems. If candidates can convey their good intentions by seeming to be "regular guys" with whom one would like to "have a beer," the rhetoric of accomplishment can establish the other necessary condition of problem solving, in the minds of naïve technocratic realists: the strength to battle against those with bad intentions (291). Someone who got things done must have been persistent, hard-working, and willing to sacrifice for the public. This form of rhetoric makes perfect sense when we take into account how naïve technocratic epistemology shapes the way citizens think about politics.

Friedman's theory also makes sense of ordinary citizens' perennial complaints that politicians "do nothing," are useless, and are corrupt (290; cf. Huey-Burns 2016 and Plutzer and Berkman 2018). Each of these grievances makes sense in light of the technocratic theory of populism. If problems persist but are easily solvable, then by definition politicians aren't doing what they were elected to do. They are doing nothing, then, in the sense that they're not doing what they ought to be doing. Since they manifestly aren't solving problems, they are, moreover, useless. Finally, if they aren't spending their time solving problems, they must be corrupt, since neglecting their duty as elected representatives is a kind of corruption of their office—to say nothing of their other activities, which likely include the apparently corrupt practice of soliciting campaign donations (296).

The theory also makes sense of the anger ordinary citizens voice when they consider that nothing in their lives has changed after politicians promised improvement. Recurrent complaints that politicians always break their promises—despite convincing empirical evidence that they strive to keep them and succeed in the majority of cases (Hill 2016)—make good sense if the implicit, overarching promise against which politicians are being judged is the technocratic vow to solve the people's problems. When serious problems persist, politicians have ipso facto broken that vow.

The rhetoric of accomplishment, disappointment, and anger might seem so obvious and commonsensical as to not require explanation. Yet there is nothing inevitable about any political language. Why, for instance, would we expect our politicians to do anything to solve our problems in the first place? In earlier ages, citizens did not expect governments to solve problems, if only because governments usually lacked the bureaucratic capacity to do so. This did not change for centuries, even

after the advent of strong states in the early modern period, since early states concerned themselves almost exclusively with war fighting, colonization, and dynastic advancement. It took huge transformations in people's *ideas* about the proper scope of states and the obligations of government to give birth to the quotidian language of expectations met and unmet that we use today.

My argument is that technocracy played an essential role in the transition from the democratic ideologies and mass politics of the nineteenth century to the populist politics of the twenty-first: it served as a practical interpretation of what democracy in the real world actually means. Today, we can recognize the indelible marks of technocracy on our politics in these perennial features of our political discourse and cognition. Democratic ideology thus seems to have developed, among many citizens, into a basically technocratic ideology.

Populism, Technocracy, and Democratic Theory

What are the implications of such a transformation for democratic theory, reform, and practice?

Friedman does not present technocracy as a development of democratic ideology, as I suggest, but rather as a freestanding ideology with utilitarian roots that ultimately extend back to the sixteenth century and the rise of what Foucault called "the art of government" (349). For Foucault and Friedman, the art of government denotes a commitment to regulating the activities of the populace, for its own good—which, according to the Cameralist theorists of the early modern Holy Roman Empire, would have the side effect of increasing the wealth of the principality and thus the resources available to the state treasury (the *Kammer*). In institutional terms, the art of government dovetailed with the increasing professionalization of administration that went along with the rapid growth of state capacity in the early modern period. But what makes technocracy as an ideology in the Progressive Era so interesting is that it arises at the collision point between this paternalistic, elitist development and mass democracy, which began to spread in the late nineteenth century at the same time that state-building entered a new period of massive growth. Technocracy, I would say, is the art of government pressed into service of democracy.

Since a technocratic bureaucracy must operate with clear, written goals, the theoretical will of the people had to be hypostatized into a

concrete list of problems that the bureaucracy could tackle. This was a transformation of democracy, even a deviation from it, but it was done in such a way as to be virtually unobjectionable on democratic grounds. This is because technocracy developed as a concrete interpretation of what the will of the people *is* at any given time. Unless we maintain that the people would prefer their government not to address the problems that beset them, or that the people would prefer to address them individually, without the aid of coordination, organization, or political power, democrats willy-nilly become technocrats.

In this light, recent work advocating epistocracy and meritocracy as viable rivals to democracy make a certain kind of sense that is internal to technocracy (just as Friedman's critique of epistocracy is internal), even if their malignity is not dispelled. When Daniel A. Bell (2015), Jason Brennan (2016), and Bryan Caplan (2007) argue for exclusionary political systems on the grounds that they can better solve the people's problems, they are appealing to technocratic standards of legitimacy against democracy; they are not attempting to resurrect the Platonic philosopher-king but rather enthrone the social-scientific bureaucrat. But a key reason their arguments have any normative plausibility is that technocracy developed its theory of legitimacy as an interpretation of what the people want, and not unreasonably. Because of this, those who resist creeping epistocratic practices and attitudes struggle to articulate a normative response that does not presuppose a sharp dichotomy between democracy and technocracy, as with some of the theories of populism I have criticized. Meanwhile, internal responses to epistocracy have, like the epistocratic theories themselves, tended to take an epistemological approach, outlining why experts are unlikely to make the good, problem-solving decisions promised by expert rule. I suspect that this explains why the burgeoning epistemic democracy literature has been so concerned with epistemological mechanisms by which mass publics can make better decisions than small groups of cognitive elites (Estlund 1994; Waldron 1995; Page 2007; Estlund 2008; Landemore 2013; Elliott 2020). This response implicitly concedes that solving problems generates legitimacy, but contends that experts do not inherently outperform democracy in doing so.

It may come as a shock to many readers that Friedman thinks there is a "technocratic value consensus" in the United States, and perhaps elsewhere (15). If Friedman is right about this value consensus, it can be interpreted in a number of ways. One is to see it as a predictable

symptom of a privatizing liberalism (or, perhaps, neoliberalism) that privileges private life over the politically active life of the citizen. Such an orientation, when combined with the problem-solving orientation of technocracy, suggests that many citizens just want their problems solved for them, and do not necessarily care to take an active part in public life—in line with the thesis of John Hibbing and Elizabeth Theiss-Morse's *Stealth Democracy* (2002), on which Friedman relies (289-90). Many democratic theorists respond to disengaged citizens like these as if they are in need of enlightenment, and as if, once adequately educated, they will change their minds and affirm the value of active citizenship. They point to the fact that civic attitudes are often endogenous to social conditions, meaning that when people are made to take an active part in civic life, such as by serving on a jury, it can spark deeper patterns of political engagement and participation (Gastil et al. 2010). This is no doubt correct—the evidence is persuasive—yet none can deny that the power of education and experience to inspire political engagement is far from perfect. Jury service increases the likelihood of voting, for instance, by several percentage points, but does not move every single individual. Thus, I want to suggest, for the sake of argument, something rather uncomfortable for many democratic theorists: that no amount of experience or education will convince *everyone* that political participation is an intrinsically worthwhile pastime. Instead, we should consider the possibility that modern polities are durably divided into groups with different evaluations of the worth of democratic engagement.

Recognizing technocracy as a lineal descendant of democracy helps to clarify this possibility, and makes it plausible. It might be that the polity is divided into a democratic group of citizens actively and enthusiastically performing the classic rituals of democratic participation and a technocratic group of policy consumers who are looking for government to solve their problems and who view participation mainly as a chore. I want to insist that we consider such a division permanent, such that there is an enduring multiplicity in the citizen-types populating modern polities (Elliott 2017).

There are two things to note about this possibility. First, the supposition is not that the technocratic citizens are politically apathetic or passive in the sense of giving politics no mind. Rather, they find no reason to see politics as intrinsically valuable. They are thus willing to participate, at least if it is not too taxing, but not for its own sake. Second, their

difference with conventionally democratic citizens transcends ordinary political disagreements, as it concerns the type of regime and the obligations and expectations that go with it. Although we might all *verbally* agree that the regime is a democracy, technocratic citizens bring a different set of expectations than democratic citizens for both themselves and their representatives. In line with the thesis of *Stealth Democracy*, the technocratic group wants to minimize its participatory input but maximize the performance of its representatives in solving social and economic problems.

A durably divided polity consisting of conventional democrats and citizen-technocrats puts democratic reformers in a serious bind. On the one hand, they want to expand the openness of democratic institutions and create new ways to bring ordinary citizens into the halls of power (Landemore 2017). Usually, too, they wish to revise the modes of democratic participation to encourage the wider use of deliberation. On the other hand, if there is a sizable group of citizens who will not, of their own volition, pursue new institutions and forms of participation because they are relatively costly and demanding, the new institutions may become dominated by the democratic group. If you build it, they will not *all* come; democrats will come disproportionately. If the democrats are the main group using these institutions, and if the institutions are truly politically empowering—as all reformers would insist—the result will be a substantial power imbalance between the democrats and the technocrats, constituting a sizable new source of political inequality.

This is the dilemma generated by the coexistence of democrats and citizen-technocrats. If reformers pursue democratic innovations that involve costly and demanding forms of participation, they stand to actually move their polity farther from their own democratic ideals by generating new patterns of political inequality, ones that track preferences for political engagement as an end in itself.

Power Without Knowledge has, ironically, made me more concerned about this likelihood than ever before. By emphasizing the diversity of people's webs of belief and the gulfs of inscrutability that will inevitably beset them, Friedman has convinced me that the technocratic outlook that includes no love for democratic participation is not going anywhere. There will always be citizens who do not love democracy, even if they will begrudgingly fulfill a civic duty that is not too onerous. Nowadays, we may call these citizens populists.

In that case, it seems to me that democratic reformers face a dilemma. They can either persist in pressing for reforms that they know will reliably exclude those who would rather spend their time doing other things, perhaps telling themselves some version of the excuse that as long as people have the opportunity to participate—even if we know for a fact that they won't—political equality is secured. This approach seems untenable to me, but my anecdotal experience suggests that some democratic theorists would be willing to embrace this horn of the dilemma. The other option is to rethink the predominant menu of reforms and develop alternatives that will truly empower all citizens, even if this requires retreating from deeper modes of participation and institutionalizations of them. I suspect that this direction is likely to prove more fruitful, though I cannot properly defend this intuition here. In either case, it remains, I believe, a genuinely difficult choice.

If the best kind of reading is that which makes one think discomfiting thoughts, then *Power Without Knowledge* would very much qualify for myself, and likely for most democratic theorists, in spades.

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