



The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy

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***The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy* offers a powerful criticism of the inconsistencies of representative democracy.** Described both as "the Hobbes of our age" and as "the philosophical godfather of Nazism," Carl Schmitt was a brilliant and controversial political theorist whose doctrine of political leadership and critique of liberal democratic ideals distinguish him as one of the most original contributors to modern political theory. *The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy* offers a powerful criticism of the inconsistencies of representative democracy. First published in 1923, it has often been viewed as an attempt to destroy parliamentarism; in fact, it was Schmitt's attempt to defend the Weimar constitution. The introduction to this new translation places the book in proper historical context and provides a useful guide to several aspects of Weimar political culture. *The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy* is included in the series *Studies in Contemporary German Social Thought*, edited by Thomas McCarthy.

The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy Details

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mwr says

Schmitt's always insightful but often provides terrible arguments. This book is no different, though he also provides some good arguments. One of the better takeaways is a decent understanding of how liberalism and democracy are incompatible.

Colm Gillis says

Introductions by McCarthy and Kennedy are very impressive. The work itself looks disjointed, but there is a logic behind the fact that it seems almost like two books forced into one. Plenty of quotable Schmitt lines (or paragraphs). The book is just a little impressionistic, however.

Shameera says

Provocative line of argument that adds great insight into the distinction between conventional parliamentary practices and the seemingly-apparent democratic thought that underpins them in an attempt to question and answer what the people might really want. Nonetheless, a little tautological and text requires a more comprehensive range of evidence to back his assertions up.

Hadrian says

It would be easy and intellectually lazy to dismiss this entirely as a predecessor to Nazi legal theory (to say nothing of his own association with that gang of thieves and murderers), but I am willing to admit that his criticisms of parliamentary democracy are not wholly without merit.

In this short and terse little tract, he argues that a parliament system is no means of rational debate, as claimed by liberal theorists, but instead an appendage of other institutions, and that all decision-making is held in subcommittees or elsewhere. Furthermore, he goes after the broad theoretical assumptions which are the basis of classical liberalism, including whether individuals in a pluralistic society can create a normative decision - that is, whether individuals with different beliefs can agree on something which can be made law. He firmly says, 'no', and like Thomas Hobbes, he argues that only a single dictatorial authority can establish decisions, and that a homogeneous society, bounded by myths instead of failed attempts at rationality, can only lead to a truly reasonable legal order.

Now Schmitt is an intelligent man, and not nearly as hackish or transparently evil as Julius Evola or Roland Freisler. His first point is not entirely wrong if we make an institutional analysis of parliamentary institutions (say, the role of business interests), but his second is substantially more troublesome.

Schmitt, using selective readings and misinterpretations of legal theorists, makes a specious separation between liberalism and democracy, claiming that the two are incompatible. Through the flawed systems of

representation that exist, a 'people's will', if such a thing exists, cannot be said to exist in a government.

Therefore, only a strong autocrat only has the power to understand and act upon the popular will. Authority is thus above legality. This, therefore, is the legal philosophy behind the Nazi state, which thus claimed to represent the people and eliminate a heterogeneous society, but also the justification for the Führerprinzip.

Now Schmitt's final conclusion and his avocations are odious, but he hit upon a more coherent problem with democracies and the liberal view of legal equality, where all have the same rights under the law. How do we reconcile the fact that there are different people with different beliefs, that they politically oppose each other, and sometimes we cannot negotiate with them?

The Nazi solution we can dispose of for obvious reasons. It is immoral and impractical to say that we can make society homogeneous. But this opens up a new world of pluralism and competing interest groups, and how these could be balanced out. Even with a separation of powers, there are still competing interest groups which could distort the purpose and legal justifications of democracy, and this is a question which few can satisfactorily answer.

Ha says

(It's hard to like books your professor reasonably shat on.)

Iben says

Ok, I admit I didn't make it past the first chapter... But I enjoyed what I did read! If you have an interest in theorists like Agamben, it is good to start with Schmitt. After all, he was the one to coin the phrase "state of exception."

Kbrtrn says

Carl Schmitt- Kanunilik ve Mesruiyet çevirisinden sonra hukukçular çeviri yapmas?n noktas?na gelmi?tim ki imdada Emre Zeybeko?lu'nun Carl Schmit- Parlamenter Demokrasinin Krizi çevirisi yeti?ti((: Kitap ince gibi görünsede epey bilgi bar?nd?r?yordu içinde; Hegel'den Marx'a, Sorel'den Proudhon'a kadar.. Yaln?z Schmitt'in mevzuyu sosyalizmden al?p milliyetçili?e ba?lamas? ola?anüstüydü. Fikirlerine kat?lmasam da adam zeki yapacak bir ?ey yok((:

Tim Lundquist says

I will admit - I enjoy reading Schmitt. He hates everyone, and has an appropriately pessimistic view of political institutions and our calcified system of parliament.

Read&Run says

sat?r aralar?nda güzel konulara giren ancak yeterince tart??madan bir ba?kas?na geçen bir kitap. Konuyla ilgili ara?t?rma yapanlar, yazara ilgi duyanlar aç?s?ndan belki okunabilir ancak günümüz gündelik okuyucusuna, parlamenter sistem, açmazlar? ve alternatifleri için yeterince bilgi sunmaktan uzak.

Sarah says

A democracy demonstrates its political power by knowing how to refuse or keep at bay something foreign and unequal that threatens its homogeneity.

It has the best preface I've ever read. Probably the only instance in my personal reading history where I encourage reading the preface and excluding the bulk of what follows.

John Smith says

Brilliant analysis of the indecisive nature of legislative bodies.

Hasan Çakan says

Çeviriden mi yoksa yazar?n dilinden mi bilemem ama baz? bölümlerde metnin içine bir türlü giremedim. O nedenle de anlamakta güçlük çektim. ?leride tekrar okumak gerek.

Mirza Sultan-Galiev says

As usual with Schmitt, a well argued and interesting text.

Also as usual, (and perhaps to be expected from a right wing Catholic), the analysis is carried out on a completely idealistic level, that of the "self-moving" history of ideas alone.

His assertion that Marx's fanatical pursuit of the "critique of political economy" was motivated by a need to show that the

bourgeoisie as a social phenomena was fully comprehensible and thus outmoded in a Hegelian sense, strikes me as dubious to say the least and indicative of what was probably a very shallow grasp of the relevant writings on Schmitt's part.

When it comes to his examination of irrational myth, he makes a connection in terms of intellectual lineage between Proudhon and Bakunin to Mussolini through the mediation of Sorel.

The family relation of fascism with both elements of anarchism and the broader scene of non-Marxist socialism and syndicalism is indisputable, and has been covered in depth by Sternhell, however to concentrate as Schmitt does in thus text upon classical anarchist thought as an anti-rational negation of the Enlightenment is incredibly one sided and misleading.

The culture of pre WW1 anarchism was permeated by a naïve faith in science, progress and reason quite

comparable to that of liberal positivism, everyone from union organizers to individualist expropriators finding common ground in the redemptive power of reason.

His description of democracy is vivid and appropriately cynical, however he stumbles when it comes to the assumption of a necessary contradiction between democracy and parliamentary bourgeoisie liberalism, failing to see that the homogenous social body he postulates as requisite for democracy is in fact provided by liberalism's world of commodity producing citizens nominally equal in the sphere of exchange (with the revolutionary proletariat as perhaps the "worst" heterogeneous element of them all).

Mehmed says

An undoubtably very interesting historical document to understand the political crisis in 1920s Germany. Further, Carl Schmitt skilfully criticises the rationalism of 'western' liberal ideals and exposes the faults and inconsistencies of parliamentary democracy.

Mehmet says

Bu kitapta ezberimi bozan fikirler buldum. "Demokrasi diktatörlü?ün z?dd? de?ildir, demokratik diktatörlük de olabilir" gibi. Yine demokrasiyi "e?itlerin e?itli?i" oldu?unu söyleyen yazar özellikle Marksist diyalekti?e dair çok dikkat çekici tespitlerde bulunuyor. Okunmas?n? öneririm.
