

THE DIVISION OF EPISTEMIC LABOR IN DEMOCRACY

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DOI: 10.20901/an.12.05

Prethodno priopćenje
Primljeno: veljača 2016.

Abstract Thomas Christiano claims that one of the fundamental challenges democracy is faced with is the appropriate division of epistemic labor between citizens and experts. In this article I try to present and analyze Christiano's solution from the perspective of social epistemology while utilizing the concepts and tools provided by this discipline. Despite fundamentally agreeing with his position, I attempt to propose a certain addition which might enrich this solution with additional epistemic and political responsibility. In the first part, I briefly elaborate on the relevance of social epistemology in discussions regarding the epistemic justification of deliberative democracy. In the second part, I contextualize Christiano's view within discourses regarding social epistemology and identify his approach as reliability democracy due to his belief that truth-sensitive decision-making processes are ensured through the usage of reliable mechanisms (which allow for expertise to generate the epistemically best decisions possible). In the third part I attempt to provide arguments that support further elaboration of Christiano's proposals in the direction of ensuring additional epistemic and democratic quality of decisions.

Keywords deliberative democracy, division of epistemic labor, reliability democracy, epistocracy, fundamental and derivative epistemic authority

Thomas Christiano claims that one of the fundamental challenges democracy is faced with is the appropriate division of epistemic labor between citizens and experts. He himself offers a suggestion of how the notion should be implemented while taking into account the assumption that the epistemic justification of democracy is just as important as the political or, using simpler terms, while accepting the thesis that democra-

cy should have the epistemic property of generating epistemically high-quality decisions or solutions to problems. In this article I try to present and analyze Christiano's solution from the perspective of social epistemology, utilizing the concepts and tools provided by this discipline. Despite fundamentally agreeing with his position, which I will further refer to as reliability democracy, I attempt to propose a certain addition

which might enrich his solution with additional epistemic and political responsibility.

In the first part, I briefly elaborate on the relevance of social epistemology in discussions regarding the epistemic justification of deliberative democracy. In the second part, I contextualize Christiano's view within discourses regarding social epistemology and identify his approach as reliability democracy due to his belief that truth-sensitive decision-making processes are ensured through the usage of reliable mechanisms (which allow for expertise to generate the epistemically best decisions possible). In the third part I attempt to provide arguments that support further elaboration of Christiano's proposals in the direction of ensuring an additional epistemic and democratic quality of decisions.

1. Social Epistemology and the epistemic justification of deliberative democracy

Traditionally, epistemology focuses on doing research related to the process of forming, revisiting and retaining the beliefs of individuals or to the epistemic properties of beliefs. Social epistemology, as a part of epistemology, deals with the more specific research of the process of creating, revisiting and retaining the beliefs of all epistemic agents within a broader social context, or, in other words, the epistemic qualities of beliefs held by individuals, groups, institutions and social systems (Goldman, 1987, 1999, 2004, 2010, 2011, Prijic Samarzija, 2005). Social epistemology is, due to the object of its focus, far more related to epistemically relevant situations in real life, which allows us to refer to it as applied epistemology or real world epistemology.

It is important to note that social epistemology departs from traditional epistemology which rarely refers to practical epistemic problems found in real life, but rather remains focused on evaluating the acquisition of knowledge in extremely idealized circumstances: individual epistemic agents are imagined as people of almost unlimited logical ability and seemingly with no restrictions regarding their cognitive resources. Moreover, standard analytic epistemology usually assumes that truth and rationality are hardly at all related to the issues of power and the social identities of participants in epistemic practices. The epistemic subject has been understood as an asocial being and socio-political circumstances have been disregarded as irrelevant to epistemic questions. In opposition to the traits of traditional epistemology, the influential postmodernist orthodoxy developed, and not only pointed out the importance of the social in epistemic processes, but also defended the thesis that the epistemic agent is a function of power relations. It has also sought the rejection of universal norms of rationality, justification and truth. Within postmodern theories or social constructivism, the epistemic subject is reduced to her social and political role, her beliefs to social and cultural constructions and the overall epistemic task to the deconstruction of beliefs and the analysis of the socio-cultural impact that caused such particular beliefs. This difference in understanding the relationship between cognition and society reflects the tension between modernist and postmodernist orthodoxy or traditionalism and reductionism: the issues of power and the social situatedness of beliefs were ignored by the first, while the epistemic phenomenon was later reduced to power relations in society (Fricker, 2011).

Social epistemology, which was systematically articulated for the first time by Alvin I. Goldman, is, by definition, positioned between traditionalists and reductionists: it accepts the legitimacy of researching the social dimension of belief, but also retains the modernist values of traditional epistemology, primarily the view that epistemic values such as rationality, justification and truth can be considered objectively valid and not mere social constructions. Epistemic agents (individuals, groups, institutions and systems) establish, maintain and revise their beliefs/judgments/decisions under the influence of society. However, all these beliefs/judgments/decisions are not mere constructions of power and consequently can and should be a (e) valued as rational, reasonable, true or more or less suited to solve a certain problem.

One of the themes of social epistemology is researching the epistemic properties of democracy as a system with the aim of setting norms related to the epistemically optimal way of making beliefs, judgments or decisions in society. As real world epistemology, its goal is to improve the system of making decisions, beliefs and judgments in a manner that encourages those which are rational, justified, reliable and truth-oriented. In other words, it is assumed in social epistemology that democracy can be defended as a good political system not only on the basis of the principle of equal rights, but because it has proven to be particularly well suited to making good political decisions (e.g. decisions that best promote the society's interests). Goldman writes: "Writers who emphasize the way that genuine democracy makes use of 'situated knowledge' to improve the community's overall knowledgability make roughly this kind of

social-epistemological contribution to democratic theory." (Goldman, 2010: 25)

Thomas Christiano is certainly one of those authors: a political philosopher who, without engaging in social epistemology as such, has provided an important social-epistemological contribution to democratic theory. In several of his works, but particularly in the article "Rational Deliberation among Experts and Citizens," Christiano elaborates the way to make epistemically optimal decisions in a deliberative democracy (Christiano, 2012). However, before I present Christiano's position more clearly I will provide a brief introduction into the discussion by locating his views in the context of the epistemic justification of deliberative democracy as it could ameliorate the clarity of the discourse.

1.1. Deliberative democracy and experts

Democracy is *politically* justified if free and equal citizens participate in the decision-making process in a fair manner. On the other hand, democracy is *epistemically* justified if the generated decisions are epistemically optimal or of high epistemic quality, correct, true, truth-oriented, reliable and capable of effectively solving the problems citizens are faced with. Social epistemology is a natural partner of political philosophy in considering the epistemic properties of democracy i.e., in researching the epistemic justification of deliberative democracy.

The concept of deliberative democracy is relatively new in political philosophy and it refers to the view that legitimate legislative and other issues should be based on the citizens' public discussions. Thus defined, democracy is even at a conceptual level closely linked to the view that it should be an epistemically

justified system in order to be fully legitimate. Despite numerous representatives of the concepts of public discussions and the public use of reasoning in the democratic process throughout history,¹ from the very beginning there has been the question whether the fact that a decision was reached on the basis of discussion and the exchange of reasons is truly enough to define the decision as one of high epistemic quality or one that is truth-conductive.² Since the first debates

on democracy and even more pronounced after the introduction of the concept of deliberative democracy, there has been a certain awareness of the conflict between epistemic and political justification: the preservation of the values of equality, freedom, autonomy and even the participation of every citizen in the discussion and the decision-making does not automatically generate the epistemically optimal decisions. Democratic public discourse, at best, ensures that decisions are made through the rational agreement of participants. It is certainly a commendable virtue, but the question of whether such a political decision is at the same time epistemically valuable remains unanswered.

¹ Thomas Hobbes and John Locke point out that the plurality of interests is a source of civil conflict which highlights the need for the public use of reasoning (Hobbes, 1968, Locke, 1980). Jean-Jacques Rousseau emphasized the desirability of establishing consensus between citizens regarding common interests, assets and traditions which necessarily involves some form of harmonization of opinions and public reasoning (civil republicanism), (Rousseau, 1967). Hannah Arendt and John Dewey also emphasize the importance of public debate as an element of participatory democracy, autonomy and independence of citizens (Arendt, 1958, 1973, Dewey, 1988). Joseph Bessette defines deliberative democracy as the optimal framework for the public exchange of reasons, rational arguments and rational reasoning (Bassete, 1980). Jon Elster advocates the practice of rational harmonization by the means of public debate as a necessary element of democratic decision-making (Elster, 1983, 2002). And this opinion is shared by many other prominent contemporary philosophers such as Joshua Cohen, Jurgen Habermas, Thomas Christiano, Gerald Gaus and many others (Cohen, 1986, Habermas, 1987, 1996, Christiano, 1996, Gaus 1996).

² Joseph Schumpeter, an elitist, emphasized that citizens are politically uninformed, apathetic and easily manipulated and that their participation thus presents a serious danger to stability (Schumpeter, 1942). The pessimistic realist Max Weber held that there is no common good on which everyone could agree in any discussion, and argued that the optimal rule must include a managerial elite:

democracy ought to be reduced to negatively controlling the leader through the possibility of their ejection in the next election (Weber, 1964). Anthony Downs, a representative of the so-called economic theory of democracy, better known as rational choice theory, argued that there is no such common good that could be acceptable to all citizens/consumers, so the debate that would supposedly lead to a higher quality process of achieving rational results acceptable to everyone would consequently not make much sense (Downs, 1957). Likewise, many contemporary authors referred to empirical data that indicated that discussion itself does not guarantee epistemically high-quality beliefs as it takes place in epistemically sub-ideal circumstances in which participants are uninformed, disinterested and lacking time and other resources necessary for participating in a debate in a competent manner. It is said that there is nothing in these unregulated discussions that guarantees that the better informed will be able to impose their viewpoints upon others or that the less informed will be inclined to align or change their beliefs when faced with the attitudes of the better informed (Gigone and Hastie, 1993, Carpinin and Keeter, 1996, Sunstein 2006, Ahlstrom-Vij, 2012).

This tension between the epistemic and political goal is, in the second step, focused on resolving the problem of the role of experts or those who are, in comparison with other citizens, better at making informed decisions or decisions which more effectively solve problems (or at least better at avoiding bad decisions) (Goldman, 2011, Prijic Samarzija, 2011). If we seek the truth or the epistemic quality of decisions with the aim of solving problems, there is the immediate question of privileging the opinions of experts, as opposed to our deepest democratic convictions of the equality of citizens. Some philosophers actually proposed certain forms of decision-making in defense of epistocratic methods: the most famous proposals are certainly Plato's *kallipolis*, Mill's plural vote, and Schumpeter's or Weber's elitism. However, authors who criticized epistocracy and the privileged treatment of experts in democratic decision-making are far more numerous.

Objections to epistocracy or the privileged treatment of experts can be roughly divided into three groups. The first complaints argue that there are no experts in making political or ethical beliefs, judgments or decisions. Even if there are people who (objectively) know more than others about political facts, it does not make them experts in the sense that they could make decisions for or instead of others, among other things, because of the fact that in democratic decision-making nobody is obliged to accept that someone else could make a better decision about what is good for them (Rawls, 1973, Estlund 2008, Peter 2009). The second group of worries is related to the position that, even if we accept that there are experts in the matters of politics and ethics, they cannot produce epistemically better decisions because they are not neutral. The views

of experts are characterized by their special (social, class-related and other) interests or perspectives which makes their opinions poorly suited to properly reflect general interests. (Kitcher, 2011). In continuation to the stance that not even experts are objective and neutral, it is argued that in these circumstances it is difficult, if not impossible, to define an adequate way to evaluate moral expertise and to make the general acceptance of the moral expertise of experts possible (Christiano, 2008, Peter, 2009, 2013a). The third group of objections is related to doubts about the procedures of forming beliefs or making decisions in society, which necessarily corrupt the epistemic quality of decisions. In other words, even if we accepted that there were objective experts in politics and ethics who are able to abstract from their own interests and prejudices, the practices and the very organization of the system in which decisions are made are such that they cannot possibly make epistemically optimal decisions (Shapin and Schaffer, 1985, Latour and Woolgar, 1986).

In short, the fundamental problem democracy is faced with is the question of integrating the plausible idea that some people know more about certain issues than others with the democratic ideals and principles of equality and freedom (Kitcher, 2011, Christiano 2012). The crucial question here is whether it is possible at all to resolve the tension between the stated epistemic and democratic virtues, or how the epistemic and political goals ought to be harmonized.

It comes across as appropriate to classify the possible answers into three groups.

The first approach to this issue is traditionalist, or an approach that is based on strictly separating epistemological

and political values and goals. Consequently, there is a stern rejection of not only the possibility, but the necessity of harmonizing the aforementioned political and epistemic justifications of democracy. Among these political philosophers there is a prevalent and widespread belief in the primacy of the political justifications of democracy: they link the advocacy of democratic discussion mainly to the preservation of the values of equality and freedom, or to resolving political issues, as opposed to striving to improve the epistemic quality of decisions (Rawls, 1973, Gaus 2009). The aim of deliberation is not to generate (more) informed or epistemically better decisions, but to approach the intrinsic ideal of political equality. Deliberation has an instrumental value in resolving conflicts and disagreements, and it is a method through which disagreeing parties aim to resolve their dissent by the means of public, rational and impartial discourse (Gaus, 2009). Public discussion is essentially not seen as an epistemic process that pursues epistemic values, but strictly as a political process which seeks to achieve the desired political result; the exchange of reasons is only a means of achieving a better and faster alignment of stances, rather than epistemically valuable decisions (Manin 1987, Sustain 1993, Michelman, 1989, Benhabib 1996, Fishkin, 1994).

The second approach is reductionist and related to the constructivist trends of reducing epistemic goals and values to ones which are political and ethical. This approach is best characterized by the position of (pure) epistemic proceduralism.³ As evident from its very name,

epistemic proceduralism stresses the importance of the epistemic justification of democracy and argues that a fair democratic procedure itself ought to provide epistemically high-quality decisions. However, despite attempting to appear focused on the epistemic justification of democracy, this approach is essentially reductionist as it reduces the epistemic quality of decisions to conducting correct political procedures and fails to notice the independent epistemic value separated from the democratic procedure (Peter, 2009). Even when recognizing the procedure-independent epistemic value of truth and the possibility that the final result of a democratic discussion may not be of highest possible epistemic quality due to an imperfect procedure, proceduralists defend the primacy of decisions made using a fair procedure over solutions of higher epistemic quality (Estlund, 1997, 2008).

Finally, only the third approach includes the genuine intention to integrate the plausible idea that some people are more knowledgeable than others regarding certain questions with the democratic ideal and the principles of equality and freedom (Goldman 2010, Kitcher 2011, T. Christano 2012). This approach advocates the division of epistemic labor between experts and citizens in the decision-making process and is the only one that can be considered truly hybrid in attempting to harmonize epistemic and political values. This approach can include *consensualism*, the position that the division of labor should be based on harmonizing all citizens' stances in a way that is largely dependent on experts: the aim of public discussions is to achieve consensus formed by non-egotistically adapting personal beliefs to the beliefs of those who know more through an iterated process which relies on experts and the education provided by ex-

³ David Estlund condones epistemic proceduralism, while Fabienne Peter represents pure epistemic proceduralism (Estlund, 1997, 2008, Peter, 2009, 2012).

perts (Kitcher 2011). Another option is the *veritistic* approach, which relies on the view that the epistemic justification of democracy is ensured only if the utilized democratic procedures are likely to fulfill their truth-seeking mission. In other words, the goal is to organize the process of a democratic discussion in order for it to result in beliefs/decisions that are correct, truth-conducive or even true (Goldman, 2010).

Thomas Christiano is undoubtedly an advocate of the third option or the need to harmonize epistemic and political justification by means of an approach which pleads for the division of epistemic labor between citizens and experts.

The purpose of democratic deliberation is epistemic and practical, it is to uncover facts about interests and equality and how best to pursue them for the purpose of making good collective decisions. (...) The process of deliberation requires a division of labor (...). But the division of labor has traditionally been a problem for democracy and a problem for an egalitarian society. (...) The question is how can we enjoy the advantages of the division of labor and politics while treating each other as equals? (Christiano, 2012: 27-28)

Christiano, aware of the challenges his option is faced with, developed his proposed solution to the problem of harmonizing epistemic and political justification within the *veritistic* approach or the so-called reliability democracy (Christiano, 2008).

2. Reliability democracy

The very term 'reliability democracy' was introduced by Alvin Goldman in order to juxtapose it and the consensual-

ist approach: he holds that those who focus on consensus as the objective of good deliberation could not label it as 'epistemic' and contrasts them with those who plead for reliable i.e., truth-conducive public deliberation. He calls this a 'reliabilist approach to democracy' and defines the defenders of this kind of rationale or justification for democracy as 'reliability democrats.' Rational public deliberation is not necessarily sufficient to yield reliable doxastic outputs but it might be possible to add and specify additional constraints on the standards of public deliberation so that if a group satisfied those constraints in addition to the first ones, public deliberation would tend to increase the group's reliability. If we want to epistemically defend democracy because it does particularly well in making correct political decisions, it would be helpful to show (i) how specific features of (deliberative) democracy would contribute to the best decision and (ii) why such features are comparatively epistemically more valuable than alternative ones. Goldman himself is focused on the analysis of the Condorcet Jury Theorem as the paradigmatically reliabilist kind of contribution. Condorcet Jury Theorem, however, does not address public deliberation and its intrinsic substance. In contrast, it was Christiano who offered to elaborate additional procedures and mechanisms in truth-sensitive, public, democratic discussion.

When advocating the division of epistemic labor between experts and citizens, Christiano is aware of the problems generated by the epistocratic approach. Moreover, he has himself provided arguments against the privileged treatment of experts in the decision-making process because it is impossible to reach a consensus about who

the experts or the most competent individuals truly are. He highlights the differences between technical and moral competencies. The idea of democracy/equality is not a naturally plausible method of truth searching in science where the stances of the most educated in the area are the most important ones. On the other side, he notes, no distribution of social power can be based on the rankings of moral competence and simultaneously satisfy the public because of the controversies surrounding the possible ranking methods. There is no test (substantial or procedural) that can adequately assess moral competence. This does not mean that Christiano presupposes that individuals are equally competent, that we ought to think of each other as equally competent or even that our competencies are incommensurable. It simply allows that people will disagree in their assessments of other people's competences. Each person has the right to judge that another person is more competent than herself and/or others and to think of that person as a kind of advisor or leader with regard to moral questions. The crucial point Christiano wants to stress is that, even if we assume that there is genuine expertise in moral issues and politics and that inequalities in moral competences are relevant, there is no expertise that is generally acceptable in the way that we can simply leave the entire decision-making process to experts:

(...) a scheme that gives greater political power to the well-educated must inevitably appear to many to give their interests greater weight than the others. This conclusion and the principles of equality and weak publicity together imply that such a distribution of power would be unjust (Christiano, 2008: 121).

Therefore, he strives to define an option that would approach experts with seriousness, but without the mentioned epistocratic doubts: he claims that we cannot take democratic deliberation seriously if ordinary citizens generally ignore the relevant, specialized scientific knowledge whilst deliberating on issues that clearly require such knowledge (Christiano, 2012). In other words, he calls for a division of labor that respects truth-sensitive, democratic decision making procedures. The denial of epistocracy doesn't imply denying the role of experts in the division of epistemic labor. Since experts can improve the epistemic quality of decisions, the epistemic justification of democracy need not ignore the experts' contribution.

2.1. *The aim of truth-sensitivity*

Christiano holds that the democratic decision-making process needs to be truth-sensitive. Because truth-insensitivity can be identified as one of the chief challenges of democratic deliberation, the crucial question is: how does one integrate specialized knowledge of the sciences with democratic deliberation when it is clearly relevant to good decision-making.

According to Christiano, priority in the democratic division of labor ought to be given to defining the role of citizens. Citizens are essentially a driving element in society because (i) they choose the aims of society, (ii) they are the sources of different and competing research programs in various expert domains and (iii) they are the evaluators of the pursuit of aims to whom the rest of society is accountable. Expertise is not as fundamental to the choice of aims as to the development of legislation and policy. Christiano stresses that the Downsian model of the division of labor be-

tween citizens and politicians (experts) is a vastly oversimplified picture. The division of labor needs to take into account the process of differentiated deliberation between various levels of experts: deliberation among interest group associations, political parties, political staffers, newspapers, media, universities (experts in economics, sociology, law, political science, and the natural sciences) think tanks, parts of the administration, web logs and other institutions and groupings that are the hallmarks of democratic societies. These various experts use their particular expertise to determine how to implement the aims that citizens impose upon them.

Expertise plays a dual role in democratic deliberation: on one hand, there are highly sophisticated deliberations among experts concerning the best theories for crafting policies; on the other hand, expertise acts as a kind of external filter for the deliberations of other parts of the division of labor, such as that among politicians and ordinary citizens. There are four main democratic mechanisms of the deliberative process that ensure that (i) experts faithfully pursue the aims of citizens (*principal agent problem*) and that (ii) decisions are of the highest attainable quality (*problem of truth-sensitivity*). These four principles – solidarity, overlapping understanding, competition, sanctions – guarantee truth-sensitivity and simultaneously defend the interests of the citizens.

Solidarity is a mechanism by which two persons may be motivated to support each other's aims due the similarity of their backgrounds and like-mindedness. People are like-minded when they share political and moral aims and have some broadly common sense of how to achieve these aims. When citizens share this like-mindedness with experts they

can trust that the experts will pursue these common aims despite the fact that their opportunities and capacities for understanding and monitoring the experts are relatively limited. *Overlapping understanding* refers to the state of affairs in which two or more people share some expertise and do not share other expertise. This overlapping intelligibility enables citizens to partially appreciate the reasons, even if they do not fully understand the experts' theories. Namely, due to the fact that there are many persons who have a partial understanding, there are ways of monitoring the theorizing and honesty of experts. *Competition* between experts maintains the quality of the decision-making process at the highest level. Each set of overlapping experts ensures that the members supporting their own viewpoint/party and those supporting others genuinely act in accordance with the best available theories. Diversity between experts concerning their different political viewpoints, different conceptions of aims and the fact that they belong to different political parties or factions, ensures that they will regard the evidence, reasoning and arguments that the opposing experts do not take into account. Finally, the system imposes a variety of *sanctions* upon those who fail to pursue the aims faithfully and competently. The system involves networks of scientists who monitor the efficacy of policies in bringing about the aims. In this context incompetence, errors and unfaithfulness are criticized and result in the experts losing their trust-worthiness, perceived competence, political support and political and administrative positions, etc. (Christiano, 2012: 37–42).

It is crucial to notice that, despite the fact that Christiano recognizes the role of experts, he is not a representative of some form of expertism. The crucial role

in epistemic justification is ascribed to reliable democratic mechanisms which insure that truth-sensitive decisions are made through the engagement of experts:

When the mechanisms I described are working well, the external connection between the social science and the policy-maker can be a reliable one for producing reasonably good decisions (Christiano, 2012: 44).

He is a reliability democrat *par excellence* in Goldman's sense because he precisely detects this "additional constraint on the standards of public deliberation" which appropriately satisfies the epistemic rationale of truth conduciveness.

3. External and internal epistemic justification

It ought to be stressed that, according to Christiano, citizens and politicians are not expected to completely understand the specific expertise or the experts' theories in order to qualify the process of decision-making as epistemically or democratically justified. This means that citizens and politicians can choose the theory they act upon or the decision they accept not on the basis of the best evidence available to them or on the basis of fully understanding the underlying reasoning. The crucial condition of making truth-sensitive decisions is a set of reliable democratic mechanisms which citizens and politicians can rely on. In this respect the belief, judgment or decision attained by the most reliable procedures is epistemically *external* to the citizens. Reliability democracy in general and Christiano as its representative promote external epistemic justification: a decision is epistemically justified if it is produced by a

truth-sensitive mechanism even if citizens and politicians are not fully aware of the reasons that make a decision epistemically justified or true. Citizens and politicians who favor one policy over another cannot entirely defend it against their adversaries in the policy-making world as their confidence is based solely on the fact that some community of experts claims something and that there are reliable mechanisms that prevent the miss-usage of their role as experts.

Epistemically, this problem of deference to experts consists of the objection that we cannot be justified/responsible in accepting experts' stances if we are not capable of understanding them, grasping them or truly assessing their correctness: to say that a certain decision doesn't seem understandable or even true to me and, at the same time, to accept it as true cannot be epistemically responsible and justified – even under the assumption that this is truth-conducive. Furthermore, deference implies a requirement for blind trust and essentially disconnects a citizen from the decision-making process by invoking an undesirable element of epistocracy: the mere fact that democratic mechanisms are truth-sensitive (similarly to the fact that experts allegedly know better) is ineligible in justifying the coercion of citizens to obey. It seems that the externalism of reliability democracy can imply epistemically unjustified deference or blind trust in decisions we do not understand and a democratically unjustified claim for obeying a decision or solution that is not, in the relevant sense, ours.

3.1. *Derivative vs. fundamental authority of experts*

Christiano's promising proposal of the division of epistemic labor between

citizens and experts based on clearly defined roles and reliable or truth-sensitive democratic mechanisms can be adapted to evade the objection of deference. It is true that citizens and politicians simply do not have enough expertise to appraise the content of experts' beliefs, judgment and decisions. Even scientists do not have enough evidence to understand or assess the reports of other specialists in their field (Foley, 1994, Hardwig, 1991). We are all, more or less, in the position of a non-expert who does not have (or even cannot ever attain) a sufficient level of expertise or experience to understand and evaluate all decisions made by all experts. However, this does not automatically mean (i) that our reliance and trust are necessarily blind or even gullible (ii) that we are forcefully coerced into deferring our beliefs to experts or reliable mechanisms.

Our inevitable reliance on experts is based on an important epistemic need derived from epistemic dependence and the lack of expertise. However, we should require that citizens and politicians have relevant epistemic access to decisions. They have to participate in the decision making procedure in an epistemically more active and responsible way: their reliance on experts and democratic procedures needs to be based on understanding their own epistemically dependent position and, consequently, on the epistemically conscientious reasoning behind their reliance on experts and the democratic mechanisms that preserve the truth-sensitivity of decisions. In other words, instead of the stern externalism assumed in reliability democracy, a certain internalist approach should be more epistemically and democratically justified: citizens have to rely on experts and truth sensitive procedures on the basis of reason and evi-

dence, or on the understanding of the decision-making reliability. In short, what makes a result of deliberation epistemically and democratically justified is not the fact that it is based on a reliable mechanism in which experts have their role, but the fact that citizens assess or understand that the decision of experts are, for some reason, acceptable.

There are reasons to assume that Christiano shares a similar view:

The policy-maker's decision is not completely unjustified because they have reason to think that the theory on which they are operating is well thought of in the expert community. The endorsement of a number of experts gives them confidence that the theory is a good one though they do not see the reasons directly. (...) The policy-makers act on the basis of information shortcuts when they take the assent of experts as defining the boundaries of acceptable science. (...) But that reliability, I contend, cannot be established without the phenomena of solidarity, overlapping understanding, sanctions, and competition being present at least to some significant degree (Christiano, 2012: 45–46).

So, in contrast to the reliabilist concept of externalism in which decisions are epistemically and democratically justified as long as there are reliable democratic mechanisms that produce truth-sensitive decisions, I would like to stress a certain need for more participation or for better epistemic and democratic access of citizens and policy makers to decisions. More precisely, while the responsibility of a reliability democrat would be to insure a reliable democratic procedure, the internalist approach, in whose favor I am arguing, stresses that it is necessary for citizens

and policy-makers to understand why it is rational to rely on expertise and reliable democratic procedures and why it is rational to trust to these very procedures. Even if citizens and policy-makers cannot have full understanding or possess the total body of evidence to appraise the whole content of the experts' stances, their reliance or trust would be epistemically justified as long as they have enough evidence about the reliability of the procedures through which experts make their decisions. For instance, that could consist of evidence about the experts' moral and epistemic characters (or the reputation of the institutions), evidence about the contextual (conversational) circumstances that prevent deception, lying and incompetence or support trustworthiness, or even proof of the presence of Christiano's truth sensitive mechanisms such as solidarity, overlapping understanding, competition and sanctions. More precisely, the democratic division of epistemic labor needs to embrace more epistemic agency on the side of citizens: they should have an active role in assessing which particular experts deserve trust and whether reliable mechanisms truly preserve the experts' trustworthiness.

It is true that the final epistemic quality of a decision depends on the expertise and the reliability of procedures

and not on the fact that citizens or policy-makers possess the evidence. However, in the internalist approach it is assumed that an epistemic justification of deliberative democracy embraces not only epistemically qualitative decisions, but is also concerned with the virtue of the epistemic autonomy of citizens and their active epistemic participation/responsibility in the acceptance of these decisions (Zagebski, 2012). According to this approach, for instance, experts' epistemic distinctiveness would not be described in terms of a fundamental authority that implies deference or trust without understanding, but only as a derivative authority. In contrast to a fundamental authority, there is nothing undemocratic and epistemically unjustified in derivative authority because citizens trust experts on the basis of the conscientious stance that it is more rational to trust experts than themselves. Moreover, the derivative authority of experts differs from the derivative authority of non-experts only in a degree that insures the democratic egalitarian rationale. It seems that such an additional requirement for internal access can make Christiano's reliability democracy, in a relevant sense, more resistant to the objections against epistemic authoritarianism and anti-egalitarianism, or even more resistant to the objections against reliability epistocracy.

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Podjela epistemičkog rada u demokraciji

SAŽETAK Thomas Christiano tvrdi da jedan od temeljnih izazovi s kojima se demokracija susreće je primjerena podjela epistemičkog rada između građana i stručnjaka. U ovome članku pokušavam prikazati i analizirati Christianovo rješenje iz perspektive društvene epistemologije, koristeći se konceptima koji proizlaze iz tog pristupa. Iako se u najvećoj mjeri slažem s Christianovom pozicijom, nudim neka dodatna rješenja koja bi mogla obogatiti tu poziciju s dodatnom epistemičkom i političkom odgovornošću. U prvome dijelu, ukratko elaboriram važnost društvene epistemologije u raspravama o epistemičkom opravdanju deliberativne demokracije. U drugom dijelu, kontekstualiziram Christianovu poziciju u svijetlu rasprava oko društvene epistemologije i identificiram njegov pristup kao demokraciju pouzdanosti s obzirom na njegovo uvjerenje da su procesi odlučivanja koji se temelje na istinitosti osigurani upotrebom ispravnih mehanizama (koji omogućavaju stručnjacima da dođu do epistemički najboljih odluka). U trećem dijelu razvijam argumente koji pružaju dodatnu podršku Christianovim rješenjima koji za cilj imaju osigurati veću razinu epistemičke i demokratske kvalitete u donošenju odluka.

KLJUČNE RIJEČI deliberativna demokracija, podjela epistemičkog rada, demokracija pouzdanosti, epistokracija, temeljni i derivativni epistemički autoritet