The Moral Weight of a Democratic Majority

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Abstract: It is a still-influential characteristic of liberal thought since Mill that it advances moral arguments for limiting the authority of a democratic majority. This article suggests several reasons for thinking that a numerical majority nevertheless has some, though not necessarily decisive, moral weight. At the core of these reasons is the principle that every individual citizen has equal moral standing, even when he or she belongs to a numerical majority.

Keywords: democracy, liberty, equality, majority preference, individual rights, moral justification

I

Most people –at least, most people likely to read this article– will say that they believe in democracy, and that they would do what they could to defend it against its enemies. Tyrants and religious zealots who subvert democracy, by word or deed, are routinely deplored. People living under despotic regimes who can be plausibly said to be fighting for democracy are assumed to have right on their side. Nevertheless, compared to such competitors as 'freedom', 'equality', 'justice', or 'human rights', the term 'democracy' is less often invoked, as a moral value in itself, than one might expect. In contrast to the reassurance we find in the pursuit of equality, the cry 'what about democracy?' can inspire a certain disquiet, especially if it is the wrong people who utter it.

Yet, like these other values, 'democracy' appeals to equality: to the idea that every citizen must have equal standing, that no-one is to be discriminated against. If everyone is of equal standing, it follows that no-one should enjoy authority over the others, unless such authority is derived from the

consent of the others. Any decision made by a community should reflect equally the thoughts (preferences, wishes, views) of each person; and where consensus is absent, the outcome should be determined by a vote in which each person counts for one, and the numerically best-supported alternative wins. This idea that democracy reflects equal standing goes back at least as far as Locke, who after reminding us that men are 'by Nature, all free, equal and independent', argues that they will consent to majority decision as a natural implication of their consent in establishing a political community.[1] Yet today, one seldom encounters the argument that a majority preference for decision X counts, in a moral sense, in favour of X. Moral justifications for a decision tend to be found elsewhere.

There are several reasons why 'democracy' as a moral value is less routinely invoked than, for example, 'justice' or 'freedom'. One is that the establishment of democracy, at least in North America, the UK, Western Europe and Australasia, is generally taken for granted. Justice, equality and freedom are things to be pursued. But democracy is here already: the arguments in its favour are assumed to have been decisive, allowing us to move on to more interesting arguments.

A second reason is our uneasy awareness that, in practice, democracy as a moral justification for some action tends to be invoked in an *ad hoc* way, according to whether the speaker is confident of having the majority on her side. To give an example: an opinion poll of 2012 suggested clear majorities in the UK population for various proposals. These included: 'set a legal maximum earnings level of one million pounds including bonuses', and 'reduce net immigration to zero'.[2] Not everyone would have invoked these two indicators of the democratic will equally cheerfully. People often appeal to democracy when criticising what they perceive as excessively-powerful elites, such as politicians, civil servants, media organisations, lawyers, the military, etc. But they tend to spare these elites when they agree with them.

A third reason is that belief in democracy as majority preference easily merges into approval of a particular, broadly democratic political system. For many people it is actually the latter that is more important: the existence of a well-ordered, consultative apparatus of law and government that is manifestly accepted by almost everyone, in the sense that there is little civil disobedience or violent dissent. Having your vote is important, but so is the rule of law, and the day-to-day, year-to-year, social peace and continuity that come with it. Liberal-democratic constitutions such as those of the USA and the UK have prospered in spite of –or conceivably, because of– elements that are not obviously ‘democratic’ in the sense of giving the decisive say to the electors or even their elected representatives. Examples include, in the UK, the power of the unelected House of Lords to scrutinise and refer back legislation to the elected House of Commons; and in the USA, the power of the Supreme Court to strike down as unconstitutional state legislation that has been passed by a majority vote in the relevant state. Though the members of the House of Lords have been appointed by elected governments, and the members of the Supreme Court have been nominated by an elected President and approved by an elected Senate, their decisions on particular questions cannot plausibly be conceived as direct enactments of a mandate given by the people. Moreover, the members of the House of Lords and of the Supreme Court normally retain their roles for life. The distinctive contributions that they make arise precisely from the fact that, once in place, these appointees do not have to treat their every decision as a contribution to their next election campaign. In short, approval of democratic systems is not reducible to the immediate moral authority of majority preference: rather, there is an interplay of values between majority consent to specific proposed actions and policies, and majority consent to, or acquiescence in, a constitutional framework that enables the scrutiny and review of such proposals.

A fourth reason is that democracy is widely perceived, even by its admirers, as a good but imperfect system. (Freedom, equality and justice, in contrast, are *ideal* values, against which any action or proposal can be tested.) This perception of democracy as a good yet fallible system appears in the

common remark –Churchill is usually cited at this point– that democracy has its weaknesses, but has proved to be better than any of the alternatives. So it is conceded by those who hold this view that the outcome of a democratic process cannot simply be invoked as a knock-down argument to establish your case. An imperfect process can't give you a perfect justification.

For all these reasons, the idea that democratic decision offers a conclusive moral justification is difficult to defend. But I now want to ask a more cautious question. Does the view of the majority have *any moral weight at all?* In other words, can it count, morally speaking, in favour of an action or policy, even if other moral considerations are also relevant, and may sometimes outweigh it?

Perhaps surprisingly, I believe liberals are as likely as conservatives to reject this idea -or it might be more accurate to say, likely to avoid thinking about it. One possible reason is that it is easy to confuse the idea of a *numerical majority* with the idea of a *majority demographic*, such as the white population in the UK, the black population in the Republic of South Africa, Jews in Israel, or Shia Muslims in Iran. (The only near-universal majority demographic is women.) The existence of large ethnic or religious majorities does pose a potential threat of unfair detriment to minorities, and safeguards against such effects are an important requirement of a just society. But relatively few numerical majorities can be identified with majority demographics. Barack Obama's Presidential election victory in 2008, for example, was not that of a majority demographic, and neither was that of Donald Trump in 2016. Trump's support, though greatest among whites and men, cut across demographic groups to a greater extent than is often admitted, not only in 2016 but in 2020, when he made slight advances among African Americans, Latinos, and women, from 8% to 12%, 28% to 32% and 41% to 43% respectively. (These precise-looking figures should be viewed with some caution, since the methodology of exit polls can vary from election to election; moreover, in 2016 the slightly better performance of minor party candidates depleted the vote share of both main candidates to a small extent. Still, the broad pattern is clear.).[3] It is almost always a mistake to

confuse numerical majorities and minorities with demographic ones, or to reduce the often diverse views actually held within demographic groups to the views of those groups who claim to speak for them.

Let me emphasise, then, that in examining the moral weight of a majority view I am talking about *numerical* majorities, however composed. It does not matter how the majority is composed, because –to reiterate the underlying presupposition of this article– every component individual counts equally, whoever that individual may be.

II

Some, I suspect, would dismiss outright the idea that a majority view can carry moral weight, given that numerical majorities can support morally wrong actions. Familiar examples are aggressive war, racial or religious persecution, and environmental irresponsibility. We may be tempted, perhaps, to think that such outrages are only supported by majorities who have been deceived by some manipulative elite, so that such cases do not count. For reasons that will become clear later, I don't want to avail myself of that optimistic defence. Let's assume that it's at least possible that a majority might sincerely support some morally wrong policy.

In a discussion of our moral responsibility to future people, the philosopher Derek Parfit asked whether a democratic government ought to obey its electorate, if the electorate favoured a high-consumption energy policy that would benefit themselves, but greatly damage future generations. Parfit's response in dismissing this idea is quite simple. There are two distinct questions. Question 1 asks: Is this policy democratically legitimate? Question 2 asks: Is this policy morally right? The

answer to question 1, says Parfit, cannot give us the answer to question 2. Question 1 is about the decision-making process of a particular polity. Question 2 is about moral right and wrong.[4]

While Parfit is clearly right that the answer to 1 cannot *determine* the answer to 2, we can still suggest that a democratic majority gives *some* moral weight to a decision. Examples such as Parfit's include the special factor, from the point of view of a democrat, that those most seriously affected by the policy will be people who have had no input into the decision, since they are as yet unborn. That special consideration may affect our assessment of the moral weight of a democratic vote. But if we remove the special factor of an impact on future generations, we can see clearly enough from other examples that a democratic majority may carry moral weight.

Suppose that some attractive facility –a floral garden, say– is to be established in a village, and can be situated either at the west end or at the east end. Suppose that local laws provide for a democratic ballot over such decisions. Wouldn't the fact that a majority of the villagers voted for the west end give moral, as well as legal, weight to that option? The moral force of this decision is not simply a matter of proper enactment of positive law, for the law might be different. Suppose that the village by-laws, unamended since 1725, actually gave right of decision not to the villagers, but to some absentee local squire; and suppose that his decision (communicated by text from his villa in Tuscany) was to place the garden at the east end: that would equally be a proper enactment of positive law. One would have to be very sceptical about the value of democracy to think that a majority vote of the villagers has no greater moral weight than any other decision-making procedure that the law may have established. Intuitively, and in the absence of any significant moral counter-argument, the morally right place for us to establish the floral garden is the west end.

A democratic majority doesn't automatically make something right, but it should be recognised as having some moral weight, at least by those of us who believe that everyone in a society should

have equal standing. A weakness of our current liberal culture is that the arguments that *qualify* the moral authority of majority decision –and there are some very significant ones– have led to a near-indifference to the modest moral weight that majority decision should have.

III

Why should a majority belief, choice or preference have some moral weight? There are several arguments in favour of this view. Not everyone will accept all of these arguments, but their combined force is compelling. The first has been stated already: if everyone within a society has equal standing in the political process, then when a decision is contested, a majority of equals counts more in favour of a decision than a minority of equals would do. That doesn't make the majority decision morally right, but it gives it some positive moral weight.

There are other arguments. In each case, I'll set out the argument, as well as noting its limitations. At the end, I'll draw attention to the implications of denying any moral weight to a majority.

1 According to a widely-accepted moral principle, we should aim to act in ways that will increase the amount of happiness, and diminish the amount of suffering, in the world. Utilitarians emphasise this idea, and try to apply it systematically; but according to almost every moral theory, making life go better for more people is an important moral objective.

The kind of majority preference expressed in an election is only a very rough indicator of a likely increase in happiness, but it is an indicator. What people think will make them happy often, though

not invariably, will. Having your preferences satisfied is in itself likely to make you a little happier, all else being equal. That can be true even if your preference is to make a sacrifice: affluent voters who support a progressive taxation policy in order to fund welfare programmes may lose some personal income, but their happiness will be less negatively affected than it would be if they did not support the policy, and still lost the income.

The indicator of happiness given by majority preference is only a very rough one, because the wishes of a majority for X to be done don't necessarily guarantee that X will bring them benefits: at most, these voters' wishes offer a reasonable starting hypothesis. If the majority decision is expressed in sufficiently vague terms, or in terms that barely connect with reality, that hypothesis may turn out to be false. (It is possible, for example, that the enactment of Brexit will not in the end make the majority who voted for it better off or more free, as they had apparently hoped.) Moreover, in certain circumstances –for example, if the majority is formed by the rich and the comfortably-off, rather than by the comfortably-off and the poor– satisfying majority preferences may lead to less happiness and more suffering. Transferring resources from an affluent majority to a poor minority can create greater overall happiness, since the latter's welfare typically goes up more than the former's goes down. (An extra hundred pounds or dollars makes much more difference to a poor person than to a rich one.) That does not oblige us to conclude that majority preference has zero moral weight. It has some, but the moral weight on the other side (assuming our criterion is the maximation of happiness) may be greater.

2 Majority preference is also a very rough indicator of understanding. All else being equal, the political view of most people will have a more than average possibility of being the right view; and the larger the majority, the greater its tendency to be right. From a moral point of view, this

tendency matters. Morality isn't just a question of selecting morally desirable objectives. It also requires us to do some thinking about whether these objectives are actually likely to be achieved by some course of action, and to be aware of the risks of counter-productive effects and unintended consequences. Every citizen's thinking counts.

This indicator is again very rough, because it is easy to think of objections. If the question put to the electorate is sufficiently vague, or incorporates mistaken assumptions, it will be difficult for the electorate to express a sensible judgement. It's for that reason that voting, in a mass society, is generally used to elect representatives, who then make substantive decisions about policy and legislation after a process of deliberation and debate among themselves. The judgement of the electorate is an expression of greater or lesser confidence in a group of active politicians who have set out policy objectives, and have (or lack) a track record of competence. The population can also convey its views through methods other than formal ballots: through opinion polls, through conversation with representatives and canvassers, and through the press and social media –though we need to be cautious about interpreting these latter outlets as an accurate sampling of public attitudes. Social media debates tend to create a false impression of equal division of opinion, since the great majority of interventions are reactive, like strokes in a tennis match; and thanks to statistical illusions reminiscent of those that surround risk, they inflate the perceived significance of tiny numbers: the news that a thousand people are demanding the dismissal of X puts X under more pressure than the news that one in every sixty thousand people is doing so. Nevertheless, it isn't a failure of moral integrity for a politician to pay respectful attention to the dominant public understanding, if he or she can rise above these distortions and see it clearly.

Some matters of public importance require specialist knowledge and training. It would be absurd, for example, to think that an effective way of resolving emerging questions in scientific research would be to put them to a popular vote. (The public is entitled, though, to the clearest explanations

it can get, including explanations of disagreement and uncertainty within the scientific community; and it is entitled to join the conversation as soon as the potential social impacts of scientific and technological developments become clear.) But where the topic is not a speciality of scientists but a general area of human experience, a majority understanding is more likely to be right than wrong. By the age of, say, 30, most people have begun to form ideas of their own, arising from their own experiences and observations, about such matters as the upbringing of children, or the relations between the sexes. These ideas may be sketchy, limited, self-contradictory, or even wrong-headed, but in so far as they reflect the experience of those who hold them, they do not count for nothing. They have some moral weight, because they count as evidence in the determination of the most likely steps to be taken to achieve morally desirable ends.

3 The stability of a social and political system, the strength and sustainability of its popular acceptance by the population, is in itself beneficial. A system in which everyone has a sense that their views are given due weight is the most likely to command general confidence. Conversely, the more people who feel that their preferences have been arbitrarily overridden, the greater the threat posed by popular discontent to the stability of the system. Stability can then, it is true, be secured by other means, such as forcible suppression of dissent. But that is likely to lead to further harms. So there are moral reasons, reasons again based on enhancing human happiness, to favour a system that meets the wishes of as many people as possible through peaceful means.

An important corollary of this conclusion is that the electorate must be allowed to change its mind, not least because the electorate itself changes, with (in the UK, for example), millions of voters leaving the electorate by dying, and millions of others joining it as they reach the age of qualification, in any period of a few years. In each of the years 2016 to 2019 inclusive, more than 500,000 deaths occurred in England and Wales. The great majority of those dying will have been of

voting age. In the same years, the number of eighteen-year-olds in each year averaged around three-quarters of a million. Combining these rough figures, the composition of the electorate in England and Wales will have changed by about five million over four years. [5] Periodic elections reflect such changes in the composition of the electorate; a form of voting that doesn't (over time) accommodate them, subjecting the population to the will of a now-defunct majority, is almost doomed to do harm.

Someone might object here that the best guarantee of a stable social and political system is that it should be a just system. Injustice gives rise to resentment and conflict. So instead of fretting about the number of people who get their preferences satisfied, we should aim to create a just society, even if this means that –perhaps during a transitional period, in which psychological adjustment from the norms and values of an imperfect society to those of a just one will have to take place– many, perhaps a majority, of people will have their preferences overridden. The problem with this vision is that it is hard to distinguish its necessary sacrifice of some people's preferences from the suppression of dissent. It depends on assigning to some people the power to determine that the preferences of other people are obstacles to a just society, and so can be disregarded or even actively frustrated. It is difficult to see how this power of some over others is itself consistent with equality or justice. It is considerations of this kind that led Rawls, when devising his theory of justice, to lay emphasis on the need for a just society to deserve the loyalty of everyone, by manifestly caring for every individual, by treating all as equals, and by respecting the great diversity of individual preferences and ideas of the good life.[6]

4 Irrespective of the satisfaction of people's preferences, there is an independent value in equality itself. If our preferences don't prevail in some decision-making process, that may disappoint us: but we will be further disappointed if we have reason to think that our preferences were not valued

equally in the decision-making process. If we belong to a majority, yet find that the preferences of the minority have prevailed, we are likely to feel that our vote has counted for less than someone else's.

Theories that justify overriding a majority decision generally appeal to the inviolability of individual rights, which must be protected even against majority preference. But underpinning the idea of individual rights is the idea that every citizen is equal. There are indeed strong arguments for rights that defend individuals against oppression by the majority. These can be justified against a majority vote because of the seriousness of the moral wrongs against which they protect us (for example, a right not to be tortured); or because, as in the case of the rights to free expression of opinion, or to run for office, their preservation is essential to the equality inherent in the democratic process itself. But the right to have a vote that counts equally with other votes is also an expression of that equality.

When a majority decision goes against our own view, we are tempted to tell ourselves that some, or all, of the votes on the majority side do not really count. Few people will dare to say this outright, but there are plenty of ways of saying it obliquely. The only really plausible basis for discounting a majority vote is that it was determined by factual claims that were justifiably believed by the voters, but can now be shown to have been false. For example, if the villagers voted for the east end placement of the floral garden because a trusted horticultural expert had been bribed by the squire to tell them (falsely) that the soil at the west end was of poorer quality, it could reasonably be claimed that the votes determined by that view did not count, morally speaking. Most actual elections are not like that, however. Typically, competing parties offer a mixture of optimistic promises, contentious denunciations of the other parties' views or performance, and evidence-based arguments, the evidence being selectively chosen and overstated or spun to the party's advantage. Sometimes there are outright lies. But, in a free and open election, other parties have

the opportunity to contest these promises, denunciations, skewed presentations of evidence, and lies. Electors, in a spirit of *caveat emptor*, can form their own opinions on these campaigns, taking into account the presentation and track record of the candidates and their parties. These are human judgements like any other. The only case in which electors are wholly at the mercy of misrepresentations is when they have been prevented from hearing alternative views, because some person in authority over the media of communication has succeeded in debarring the expression of these alternative views as, in contemporary idiom, 'unacceptable'.

There is another way of denying democratic legitimacy to views and preferences we disapprove of. That is the attribution of what is sometimes called 'false consciousness'. The actual term comes from Marxist sociology, but it describes a way of thinking that predates the expression itself, and can be observed in people across a wide political spectrum who are not consciously invoking Marxist or post-Marxist thought. According to this theory, the voter with wrong views and preferences is not to be blamed for having them. They have not freely *chosen* to have them (in which case they would perhaps be authentic views, and deserve a certain moral weight). Rather, they have been *caused* to have them, by powerful bad influences. In a crude version of the theory, these bad influences are things like having been to the wrong school, or had the wrong kind of parents, or seen the wrong posts on social media. In a more sophisticated version, the causal factor is the brainwashing power of global capitalism. So it isn't the fault of these misguided voters: we're not victimising them; we are helping them to see more clearly, to be liberated from false consciousness. But in the meantime, we can discount their views and preferences as inauthentic.

The problem with this dismissal is that everyone has been in some sense *caused* to have their views. The causes may be complex: an interplay of psychological, social, educational, cultural, and accidental causes lies behind our every action. Even when we transcend our influences, and think out an idea for ourselves, it is because of a self, an active mental life, that we have been caused to

have, in the first place by being born with a certain biological endowment within a certain social environment. There is something impertinent, then, about the claim that *another's* views and choices are reducible to some single, disqualifying determinant that we ourselves have been smart enough to escape. However confident we may be of our superiority, we cannot separate ourselves from a fellow-citizen in this way, and still be viewing the other person as an equal. She could reply, 'I accept that I have been caused to have whatever views I have. But you have also been caused to have the views you have –perhaps not by the particular ideological structure by which you presume to dis-authenticate my views, but by some other complex set of causes. What right do you have to undertake to liberate me from my views?' To my mind, this is a good reply. The only answer to it is to take up again the position of an equal fellow-citizen, and try to win the person over by argument and evidence.

Taking these arguments together, they give us reason to assign *some* moral weight to a majority view. I don't deny that other moral considerations can sometimes weigh more heavily in the scale. In that case, majority views might have an immoral tendency, leading to immoral decisions. Earlier, I gave three examples of immoral actions democratic electorates might support: aggressive war, racial or religious persecution, and environmental irresponsibility. Though these are real possibilities for a democracy, it's worth reminding ourselves that such actions are *much more* likely to be carried out by two other kinds of agency: by undemocratic governments; and (especially in respect of environmental degradation) by private actors such as businesses, fixated on the short-term gains to be achieved by overcultivation and reckless consumption. As Kant argued in *Perpetual Peace*, societies whose governments need to secure and maintain the consent of their citizens are far less likely to undertake aggressive war than societies in which an autocratic government can act with little or no consultation of its subject population.[7] In general, historical evidence since Kant bears out this view. Democratic electorates will hesitate to authorise actions that will certainly cost them money and may conceivably cost them their lives.

Though anyone in a democratic society is free to believe a particular majority-supported decision to be immoral, and to argue for its reversal, to treat a constitutional majority-supported decision as actually *invalid*, as not binding on oneself, is a step that requires exceptional moral justification. If political insurgents, or the military, cancel a constitutional majority decision, the democratic system has been at least temporarily overthrown, with potentially negative consequences that may outweigh those of the decision itself.

It is possible to imagine cases in which such an action might be defensible. It might be argued, for example, that a military coup against Hitler in, say, 1938 would have been morally justified, even if (as we may suppose for the sake of the argument) he retained at that point the support of a majority of the population. The moral justification would lie in the grave calamities threatened by his military aggression, his mounting persecution of minorities, and his progressive dismantlement since 1933 of the democratic process itself. These, we can suppose, would more than outweigh the moral weight of a majority view, and might also be sufficient to outweigh the grave moral risks involved in any seizure of power by the military. In general, though, the history of executive or military actors overturning a constitutionally proper democratic decision is a discouraging one.

If a majority decision is treated as invalid by individuals, the effects may not be so serious. Acts of conscientious and peaceful civil disobedience, by people willing to suffer legal sanctions in order to express their moral conviction, do not overthrow the democratic system. Moreover, democratic constitutions generally provide for some overriding set of legal norms and institutional balances that can check the rashness of an ill-considered, even if popular, executive act or policy decision. These norms and balances are not contrary to democracy, provided that they are ultimately revisable by a democratic process. As I remarked earlier, many people who believe in democracy believe precisely

in a system in which both momentary decisions and long-term constraints on decision are ultimately derived from the consent of a population among whom each person counts equally.

IV

Why, some readers may be asking, should it be necessary to insist so strongly that a numerical majority carries a certain moral weight, proportionate to the size of the majority? Don't numerical majorities have all too much influence already, including the power to elect deplorable governments?

The answer is that to affirm the positive moral weight of a majority is to affirm the positive moral importance of each individual, whether, in some particular context, a member of a majority or a member of a minority. It is because the members of the minority and of the majority are individually of equal standing that the moral weight of any majority is proportionate to its size.

The liberal tradition that stems from Mill's *On Liberty* warns us of the 'tyranny of the majority' over the individual.

> If all mankind minus one, were of one opinion, and only one person were of the contrary opinion, mankind would be no more justified in silencing that one person, than he, if he had the power, would be justified in silencing mankind.[8]

Mill, writing in Victorian England, added that the silencing came not only, or even mainly, from legal censorship, but from 'social intolerance': the ostracism and stigma that 'roots out no opinions, but induces men to disguise them', and can only be endured by 'those whose pecuniary circumstances make them independent of the will of other people' –that is, in present-day terms, by people who don't need a job and can't be intimidated through their employer.[9]

The liberal tradition is right to defend the minority of one unorthodox thinker against the numerical majority. (Mill himself was careful to emphasise that 'public opinion' was often *not* that of a numerical majority, but that of some socially dominant and assertive group.)[10] The minority of a single unorthodox person matters. But so –equally– do the single persons who comprise the membership of a numerical majority. Equal liberty applies, not least, to the right to breathe freely in the public arena: to speak your mind as you see fit (though peaceably) without fear of retaliation by the police or by your employer, so that democratic debate, democratic representation and democratic decision-making can emerge from a genuine foundation of human equality. Equal liberty is for everybody, not only for saints and martyrs. Maintaining public confidence in our democratic system may depend on our recognising that point.

[1] John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, edited by Peter Laslett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), II: ss. 95-95, 330-333.)

[2] http://cdn.yougov.com/cumulus_uploads/document/ww4o7wko1q/WebVersion_Democracy%20in%20Britain%20A5.pdf Accessed 10 August 2020.

[3] See https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/election-us-2020-54783016 7 November 2020, accessed 9.11.20; https://ropercenter.cornell.edu/how-groups-voted-2016 Accessed 12/11/2020; https://edition.cnn.com/election/2016/results/exit-polls,accessed 9.11.20.

[4] Derek Parfit, *Reasons and Persons* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 480.

[5] See, e.g., https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/bulletins/deathsregistrationsummarytables/2018#:~:text=Wales%20since%201999-,In%202018%2C%20there%20were%20541%2C589%20deaths%20registered%20in%20England%20and,deaths%20since%201999%20(553%2C532). ; https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationprojections/articles/being18in2018/2018-09-13 Accessed 9 January 2021.

[6] John Rawls, A *Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1971).

[7] Immanuel Kant, "Toward Perpetual Peace" in *Practical Philosophy*, translated by Mary J. Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 322-324; 8: 350-351.

[8] John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*, in Mill, *On Liberty, Utilitarianism and other essays*, edited by Mark Philp and Frederick Rosen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 19.

[9] Mill, *On Liberty*, 32-33.

[10] Mill, *On Liberty*, 65.