Preface

In recent years there has been a remarkable growth in the number of nation states that can reasonably be termed democratic (Schmitter and Schneider 2004). The fall of the Soviet empire not only made possible the emergence of democratic forms of government among many (though not all) of its former constituents, but also changed the approach of the US. When communist-inspired movements were the main opposition to various anti-Communist dictatorships around the world, the US often supported those dictatorships. Lacking Soviet (and, for different reasons, Chinese) sustenance for opposition, US foreign policy has at least tolerated (as in Latin America), and at best actually encouraged (Africa, Middle East, parts of Asia), democracy as a form of government in the developing world – as it did in Western Europe after the Second World War. Around 200 of the world's nation states now feature more or less free and fair elections for their governments, with just under half of these meeting tougher criteria for freedom and fairness. There is of course serious debate over whether free elections are sufficient for calling a whole polity, rather than just its formal electoral procedures, democratic. Elections may be free, but most of a country's privately owned mass media may be in the hands of the supporters of one party. Or elected parliaments may be dwarfed in influence over governments by powerful lobbies, including inwardly investing multi-nationals. A cynic might argue that, if democracy is spreading so well at the level of formal political institutions, then it is likely to indicate that it is becoming less important for real power-broking. These are all legitimate questions, which require substantial research to answer them. What can certainly be agreed is that democracy is a diverse phenomenon, with room for considerable argument over the relative qualities of its different forms.

This is, of course, nothing new, and also serves as a word of strict caution: the label 'democracy' has long been bandied around at will. 'Democratic' was after all a favourite adjective of state socialist regimes. A naive nominalist observing the two Germanies of the second half of the 20th century would conclude that the difference between the German Democratic Republic and the German Federal Republic was that the former was democratic and the latter merely federal. To know what was really going on, one needed to understand the sub-text of the Leninist approach to democracy. Democracy consisted in fulfilling the historical destiny of the proletariat, the great mass of

the people. This destiny could be objectively established on the basis of scientific studies and might well differ from the actual preferences of the contemporary proletariat, trapped as they were in the false consciousness imparted by ruling classes. It was the role of communist parties to interpret the requirements of the historical destiny at any moment, and their power to do this had to be protected even against the temporary wishes of the people. Once this tortuous formula was accepted, the use of Soviet tanks to crush rebellion in Budapest in 1956 could be justified as democratic.

‘Democratic diversity’ of this kind has almost departed from this world. Its vulnerability to corruption is palpably obvious. But similar forms persist. Marxist theory considered that eventually class would replace nation as the mainspring of popular loyalty and identity. Ironically nationalist leaders today often use a formula resembling the communist one to assert their unique capacity to interpret the destiny of a nation, and therefore their right to unimpeded and unquestioned power. There are even some echoes of this in the justification offered by the US and the UK for their military actions in the Middle East, where some forms of Islam are claimed to be keeping populations in something resembling false consciousness. A further distortion of democracy appears when elected leaders of established democracies use the word to describe virtually everything they do. Because they owe their office to democratic electoral procedure, they freely appropriate the adjective even for decisions that have little or no popular support at all.

Once it ceased to be respectable for elites to debate in public whether democracy is a good thing or not, it became necessary for everyone to appropriate the term, and then to disagree about its content. While Nazis and fascists had spoken of democracy with contempt, the first revival of the far right in post-war West Germany called itself the National Democratic Party. Academic study of democracy can learn from this to use the term cautiously, aware of the heterogeneity of its application and the strong and easy temptations that exist for its misappropriation. The answer, however, cannot be to embark on a search for its one true meaning. On the contrary, in spite of the many ideological or simply corrupt distortions of democracy from above, democratic theory must admit of a diversity of forms that democracy might take, in particular and precisely where it is not imposed from above but driven from below. While relentlessly pointing out where democratic values are violated, democratic theory must remain open to novelty, willing to expect a variety of phenomena, and refrain from any dogmatic insistence on ‘one best way’ – if only to avoid joining those who hold out their own way as the high road of democratic practice for the rest of the world to follow.

How better to endorse a non-dogmatic, empirically grounded, pluralistic approach to democracy than by celebrating the work of Philippe Schmitter? Democracy is and always was at the centre of Schmitter’s work, and in

particular democracy in the making, the possibility of democracy in its real diversity, and its imperfect forms as potential steps on a difficult way to something better. This is seen especially in Schmitter's work on Latin America, probably the field where his scholarship has had most practical effect. Elsewhere in these pages Terry Karl and Guillermo O'Donnell describe this work and its impact on the sub-continent that was Schmitter's first object of study and, which is inseparable for him, of affection. If there is a *cantus firmus* in Schmitter's far-flung exploration of the subject of democracy, then it is that not only can democracy be diverse, but, crucially for people struggling in non-democratic polities, that there are many different routes to it – no 'one best way' in two senses: neither in the practice of democracy nor in how to accomplish it.

Given the broad range and the multifaceted perspectives of Schmitter's contribution to the theory of democracy, no single book can do full justice to it. So as editors we had to be selective and, like any selection, ours reflects the preferences of those making the choice as much as it does the universe from which the choice is made. This may account in part for why the first section of the book takes up the connection between corporatism and democracy. Schmitter originally encountered corporatism in Latin America, particularly in Brazil and in Peronist Argentina. He was fully aware of its ambiguity, precisely in its relationship to democracy – which enabled him to make his path-breaking contribution to the study of post-war democracy in Europe, when that continent began to rival Latin America as Schmitter's centre of attention.

Hence, in Part I of the book, Wolfgang Streeck explores the trajectory of neo-corporatism in post-war European nation states, from its success in restraining the inflationary tendencies of a demand-managed economy with unionized labour markets, to the current difficulties of welfare state reform in post-industrial society. Colin Crouch and Donatella della Porta, in their respective chapters, examine the implications – in the same problematic early 21st century where Streeck's account ends – of neo-corporatist interest politics for the representation of relatively powerless social groups. Crouch starts from the constructive contribution to democracy that he argues is made by trade unions within non-authoritarian societal corporatism; he does not accept the often posited contradiction between the two, but he does admit that maintaining his position might be difficult at the present time. Della Porta examines the new social movements that might be more realistically expressing the discontent of today's marginalized groups, and their actual and potential relations to unions. This is very much a post-corporatist perspective; and it tackles a further potentially contentious interpretation of the democratic impulse.

As noted, Schmitter's work started with Latin America, where he became especially interested in diverse transitions to democracy. More recently, as

pro-democratic movements have gained momentum in various parts of the world, Schmitter has adapted the approach developed in Latin America to other regions: the former Soviet empire; Africa; certain parts of Asia. He has also drawn attention to issues of consolidation and protection of democracy once it has been achieved. Part II of the book, therefore, concentrates on democratic transition and consolidation across a wide geographical range. Terry Karl explores the theme in general, drawing particular attention to the diversity of the routes to democracy. László Bruszt considers experiences in Central Europe, today one of the main regions for studying the growth of democracy, and one inspiring well-founded optimism. Ruth Berins Collier concentrates on Schmitter's heartland, Latin America.

Struggles for democracy mostly take place in difficult, even dangerous, contexts, and involve very weak institutions. While Schmitter's work certainly reflects this, it has also contributed to the study of democratization in the very different situation of the European Union, culminating (to date) in a book with the very Schmitteresque title: *How to Democratize the European Union . . . and Why Bother?* (Schmitter 2000). Schmitter's studies of the then European Economic Community sprang from the insights of his teacher, the late Ernst Haas, and the neo-functionalist approach Haas developed. Of course it is as impossible to capture Schmitter within a single school as it is within a single continent. We note in passing, however, that Haas, who had to emigrate from Nazi Germany to the US, and Schmitter shared a strong commitment to another fundamental value in addition to democracy, which is international peace. Haas' neo-functionalism and his, as well as Schmitter's, interest in European integration had been originally driven by the question, seen by many as central in the 1950s and 1960s, of how to ensure that Europe would never again lapse into fratricidal warfare, within nation-states as well as between them. Domestic and international peace, the former through democracy and prosperity, the latter through international integration as well as national democracy, were thus intimately linked in Schmitter's early intellectual interests and continued to provide the normative foundation of his work until the present day. In Part III of the book, which is devoted to the issue of democracy within the European Union, Claus Offe and Ulrich Preuss explore the possibilities of further democratization; Gary Marks and Liesbet Hooghe trace the development and the complexities of the neo-functionalist approach; and Gerda Falkner, by considering the place of neo-corporatist structures within the emerging EU polity, brings our survey full circle.

This book has two purposes: to explore the state of the debate over democracy and its diversity, and to celebrate the contribution of a major figure in that debate. For the majority of the essays in the book the first theme had to take pride of place: their focus is on the subject, not on the person. However, given the vividness and vigour of Philippe's personality, and the fact that it is

impossible to separate the man from the approach to social science that is represented by his work, some more personal reflections on Philippe Schmitter are in order. In his epilogue to the volume Schmitter's long-time collaborator, Guillermo O'Donnell, provides exactly that.

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REFERENCES

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