

1 **AI & Democracy, and The Importance of Asking the Right**

2 **Questions**

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6 **Abstract** Democracy is widely praised as a great achievement of humanity. However,  
7 in recent years there has been an increasing amount of concern that its functioning  
8 across the world may be eroding. In response, efforts to combat such change are  
9 emerging. Considering the pervasiveness of technology and its increasing capabilities,  
10 it is no surprise that there has been much focus on the use of artificial intelligence  
11 (AI) to this end. Questions as to how AI can be best utilized to extend the reach  
12 of democracy to currently non-democratic countries, how the involvement in the  
13 democratic process of certain demographic groups (e.g. ethnic minorities, women, and  
14 young people) can be increased, etc. are frequent topics of discussion. In this article I  
15 would like *not merely to question* whether this is desirable but rather argue that we  
16 should be trying to envisage ways of using AI *for the exact opposite purpose*: that of  
17 replacing democratic systems with better alternatives.

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19 learning.

## 20 **1 Introduction**

21 The rapidly increasing ubiquity of technology, and AI in particular, in so-called ordi-  
22 nary people’s lives has prompted much interest in questions focused on the impact  
23 of these on democracy. All but invariably, the questions discussed in published litera-  
24 ture boil down to the potential threats faced by democratic countries, the democracy  
25 itself [20], and the means of adapting democracy in a manner which would make it  
26 more resilient to such challenges [9]. What is really worrying in this debate, which  
27 takes place both in academic circles as well as popular media, are the presumptions,  
28 not in the least hidden, when such questions are asked. Namely, it is taken as *prima*  
29 *facie* that democracy is desirable [32]. Herein I argue that it is not and that rather than  
30 asking how AI should be used to preserve democracy, we should be focusing on how  
31 AI could be used to supplant democracy in a manner which is broadly supported and  
32 peaceful, with an alternative political system which is both ethically principled and  
33 practically feasible. I understand that this may sound like a controversial proposal and  
34 having discussed it numerous times with individuals with different backgrounds, I  
35 kindly ask the reader to consider the content herein as it is stated rather than projecting  
36 *a priori* expectation onto my word. As I suggest already in the title of the article,  
37 the proposal should be seen as a propaedeutic, and to this end I have tried to make a  
38 compromise between breadth and depth for the sake of clarity.

## 39 2 Challenges

40 It is a truth nearly universally observed that when challenging democracy one is  
41 responded to by a reference to a quote attributed to Churchill:

42 “Democracy is the worst form of government, except for all the others.”

43 Ironically, this short retort illustrates rather well some of the key problems with modern  
44 democracies. Firstly, it is a needless<sup>1</sup> appeal to authority, a highly morally dubious  
45 one at that too<sup>2</sup>. This reflects both the intellectual superficiality and the intellectual  
46 inertia of the general public. Secondly, the quote itself is incorrect, and the correct  
47 statement instead reads:

48 “Indeed it has been said that democracy is the worst form of Government  
49 except for all those other forms that have been tried from time to time. . .”

50 Notice that Churchill does not express his own views here, nor is the claim as strong  
51 (merely referring to the forms of government which have been *tried*, rather than uni-  
52 versally all others). Further to the aforementioned superficiality of intellectual scrutiny,  
53 here we see an example of confirmation bias which discourages healthy scepticism and  
54 so-called fact-checking when a claim conforms to preformed or otherwise preferred  
55 opinions. This is arguably a particularly serious problem in an era of rapid mass  
56 communication, and the overall information load.

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<sup>1</sup> There are perfectly valid appeals to authority; e.g. as somebody who has little knowledge about cars, I defer much of my decision-making in connection to my car, to those whom in my best judgement I consider authorities, say a local car mechanic.

<sup>2</sup> It is worth pre-empting any attempts at vindicating Churchill’s attitude by a reference to ‘different times’ by noting that he was severely criticized for his abhorrent views by more ethically minded individuals *at the time*.

57 While the idea that democracy is a poorly constituted system may be considered  
58 provocative in the present-day zeitgeist, it is far from new. Indeed, nearly two and  
59 a half millennia ago, Aristotle discussed democracy with impressive clarity and  
60 thoroughness, describing it as one of the degenerate forms of government. His dislike  
61 of democracy is illustrated well by the discussion in *The Politics* of which is worse,  
62 democracy or tyranny.

63 Aristotle's arguments ring true today probably more than ever. In particular, and  
64 with a reference to the aforementioned superficiality, lack of education, and intellec-  
65 tual inertia of the public, Aristotle quite correctly predicted what can be now very  
66 clearly seen in practice: that nominal democracies quickly become *de facto* oligarchies  
67 whereby a powerful few control the opinions of many. Given that the human nature  
68 has not changed since, but that the volume of information and the complexity of issues  
69 of relevance have vastly increased, modern technology makes this control that much  
70 more potent. The incredible amounts of money spent on political advertising and  
71 campaigning provide strong evidence of this. Would those who spend this money  
72 really be doing so were it not conducive to their goals?

### 73 2.1 Perceived legitimacy

74 As just noted, democracies as constituted in modern times, quickly become *de facto*  
75 oligarchies. The distal power of oligarchs is exercised by means of proxy layers.  
76 The first of these features in the form of demagogues – public figures who appeal to  
77 the broad public, usually both by personal charisma and by superficially attractive  
78 messages. Most proximally though, what one observes is the tyranny of majority

79 (indeed, Diogenes observed: “The mob is the mother of tyrants.”). This is extremely  
80 worrying as the sheer power of numbers gives this dominant group a genuine feel of  
81 legitimacy, often cynically but correctly described as the counting of heads without  
82 taking into account what is inside them [28].

## 83 2.2 Vanity and jobs at stake

84 It has been observed over long periods of time and across cultures that tyrants relish  
85 and demand flattery [24, 12]. And it is a rare tyrant more demanding of it than the  
86 mass. Quite literally not a day passes without an exasperating call from one or another  
87 that ‘all that we [the public] want is for politicians to tell us the truth’ [29]; yet only  
88 about 13–14% believe that they do [22]. Indeed, much of the work on the use of  
89 AI and data analysis for perceived social benefit focuses precisely on this – on so-  
90 called ‘fact-checking’. Putting aside that many of the questions that the public seeks  
91 answers to are complex and cannot be expressed meaningfully in a simple sentence,  
92 requiring nuisance and often containing extra-scientific, philosophical elements, one  
93 major reason for the scarcity of truthfulness lies in that being a democratically elected  
94 politician is now seen as a *job* or a career, as opposed to a social and public *duty*.  
95 This fundamentally changes the nature of relationship between the governing and the  
96 governed. One consequence is that politicians are invariably fighting for their job,  
97 and telling the public the somewhat uncomfortable truth (such as that they are not

98 sufficiently educated to make or judge certain complex decisions) would quickly bring  
99 one's career to an end [41, 14, 2]<sup>3</sup>.

### 100 2.3 Inertia or: devils, those you do and those you do not know

101 After the numerous fundamental flaws with democratic governance are exposed, the  
102 usual attempt at halting further engagement with the topic comes in the form of the  
103 claim that there is no better alternative. When this view is challenged, the inadequacy  
104 of public education again becomes apparent: virtually without exception tyranny  
105 (dictatorship) and communism are the only alternatives that people are aware of. The  
106 latter is arguably not even a valid alternative, in the sense that it is not necessarily a  
107 political system but more so a way of organizing economy, ownership, etc. (succinctly  
108 and somewhat simplistically put, given the tangential nature of the issue and the  
109 manuscript length constraints) – for example, there is no fundamental reason why a  
110 communist government could not be democratically elected [10]. But what is clear  
111 is the woeful lack of awareness of the rich body of work on political theory. Few  
112 are aware of even the basic concepts, such those of duocracy, elected monarchy, and  
113 many others [4], let alone of the rich milieu of mixed constitutions which can be  
114 weaved by having different decision-making systems interlocked in a coherent manner.  
115 Indeed, while this discussion is outside the scope of the present article, it is a kind of a

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<sup>3</sup> For specific examples see: <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-7084113/STEPHEN-GLOVER-politician-tells-whopper-taken-court.html>,  
<https://www.maitimes.com.au/story/6056940/the-greens-field-mallee-candidate-in-federal-election/>, <https://www.derbytelegraph.co.uk/news/extinction-rebellion-protesters-stage-big-3341517>

116 mixed constitution that we should be seeking to replace modern democracies with –  
117 one which uses democratic decision-making in one realm, aristocratic bodies (in the  
118 original sense of the word, rather than the modern pejorative one) in another, possibly  
119 random polling constituted bodies in yet another, etc.

120 This ignorance of political theory is in part caused by and in part complemented  
121 by ignorance of history. The general public is virtually entirely unaware of why and  
122 how the current electoral processes came to be (e.g. the Electoral College system in  
123 the USA, or the extent of suffrage in the UK). To give but one of a plethora of possible  
124 examples, few people are aware of the major changes that the British democracy has  
125 undergone even in its recent history not the least of which is the expansion of suffrage  
126 rights (save for women's rights, which are discussed frequently), with the electorate  
127 size of 5.7 million in 1885 (cc. 16% of the population) to 45.8 million in 2018 (cc.  
128 69% of the population).

### 129 **3 Ubi ire, AI?**

130 The previous discussion of the key fundamental flaws of present-day democracies, as  
131 well as the reasons why these flaws remain largely unnoticed or attributed to practical  
132 (rather than inherent) factors, shines a light on the steps which need to be taken to  
133 pave a way towards alternative political systems. An outline of some which I propose  
134 is presented next, in the rough order in which they need to be implemented.

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### 135 3.1 Person's value vs political role

136 As intimated in the previous section, an appealing aspect of democracy lies in the  
137 perceived equality between people 'at the ballot box'. Thus, any deviation from this  
138 state inherently creates inequality amongst those previously seen as equal, and this  
139 is all certain to provoke a vitriolic response in many, seeing it as elitism (the kind of  
140 elitism will depend on the criteria used to effect differentiation between individuals). I  
141 expect that many (or most) would see this as some individuals being seen as 'better'  
142 than others. As the first step towards the liberation from the democracy fetish, it is  
143 crucial that this incorrect inference is rebutted credibly and with clarity.

144 Firstly, let us observe what ought to be a simple fact: the perceived equality does  
145 not exist even now *even at the ballot box*. For example, all elections require the  
146 voters to be at least of a certain age (say, in UK general elections, at least 18). This  
147 certainly does not mean that children are less valued as individuals. Equally, people  
148 with some mental impairments are prohibited from voting, and yet nobody would  
149 suggest that they are any less entitled to happiness, the freedom from suffering, etc.  
150 More subtly, there is geographic discrimination (n.b. herein I use this word in a non-  
151 moralistic, objective sense, and attach no judgement to it). Two individuals on different  
152 sides of an international border do not have the right to vote in the other's country's  
153 general elections. This seems 'natural' and is accepted by virtually everybody. Yet,  
154 how does it make sense that an arbitrary chance of birth, entirely amoral in nature,  
155 should effect such differential power (consider the power of a voter in a prosperous  
156 country, rich in natural resources, and say, with powerful international presence vs a  
157 small and impoverished one, with scarce natural resources and no international power



158 whatsoever)? Moreover, inequality already exists not only in the eligibility to vote but  
159 also in the eligibility to be voted in – in the UK for example, only persons aged 18  
160 or over can be candidates in general elections (until 2006 the threshold was 21); in  
161 the USA, presidential candidates must be at least 35 (which has remained unchanged  
162 since 1787).

163 All of the above can be the starting points in demonstrating that differential roles in  
164 the political process do not imply differential appreciation of individuals, their rights  
165 as sentient beings, etc. The usual cliché used to describe democratic rule is ‘rule by  
166 the people’. Appealing as this appears to be, it is actually entirely besides the point –  
167 the aim should be ‘rule *for* the people’, or what Aristotle termed *polity*.

### 168 3.2 Knowledge, education, and complexity of politics

169 That the equality of individuals with respect to their right to pursue happiness, etc.  
170 does not necessitate equality in terms of their political roles is the first step towards  
171 the goal. Nevertheless, the argument put forward thus far not does imply that political  
172 inequality is desirable, and therein lies the next challenge. The focus here has to be on  
173 the complexity that underlies effective and principled political decision-making. This  
174 balancing act requires a strong background in history, geography, statistics, natural  
175 science, economics, and a plethora of other challenging subjects. Yet, most people  
176 lack sufficient knowledge in any one of these [35]; indeed, some prove to be extremely  
177 challenging even to highly educated professionals [25]. This makes policy driven  
178 electoral choices, purportedly favoured by voters in democratic societies, an unwise  
179 proposition. There are likely to be two main factors at play here, which have been and

180 continue to be studied extensively: a person's perception of own ignorance (i.e. lack of  
181 knowledge) in a certain domain and the associated perception of risk [11]. Put simply,  
182 in the context of interest in this paper, the voter may be underestimating their ignorance  
183 of, for example, geography, or they may be failing to appreciate the significance of  
184 this ignorance in their political decisions. After all, nobody is suggesting a popular  
185 vote on, say, the approval of drugs for therapeutic use – there is an understanding that  
186 few are qualified to make such decisions, despite the consequences 'affecting us all'  
187 as democratic demagogues often say. The issue is simply that of competence and it  
188 must separated from any associations with one's worth, as discussed previously.

189       One should not be under the illusion that the problem succinctly expressed by  
190 this section's title can be appreciably remedied though more or better education – a  
191 less radical means than that advocated herein – a panacea like solution frequently  
192 espoused by the political and intellectual classes alike. What is wanting here is  
193 not mere knowledge. Knowledge of procedural or factual matters – veritism, in  
194 short [19] – even if reasonably comprehensive, does not suffice in the context of  
195 modern political decision-making where the complexity of challenges encountered  
196 requires extensive synthetic judgements. Rather, what is necessary is *understanding*  
197 [34]. Admirable in spirit as it is when proposed by honest advocates, the idea that  
198 the general population can be expected to develop a level of understanding of the  
199 intellectual realms important for meaningful participation in democracy, is utterly  
200 unrealistic. The idea's phantasmic nature already becomes apparent after a simple  
201 consideration of the cognitive abilities of the majority, to speak nothing of a myriad of  
202 additional practical challenges, including the cost that implementing such education

203 would entail, the impact on the economy effected by universally prolonged studies,  
204 etc.

### 205 3.3 The cult of science

206 Given that my aim is not to provoke controversy for the sake of it but rather to highlight  
207 important issues that AI can help with, it has been my aim to constrain myself to a  
208 single blasphemy only – that of rejecting democracy. Nevertheless, I could not avoid  
209 touching upon another, without which the complexity of political decision-making  
210 would be severely incomplete. As the section title reads, it concerns what rightly can  
211 be called the cult of science. This may be strange to read following the discussion thus  
212 far, so I must elaborate.

213 Over the last century or so, the West has witnessed a remarkable change in reli-  
214 giosity [18]. To quote Franck and Iannaccone [18], whose findings are representative  
215 of the body of work in this area:

216 ‘. . .our statistical tests offer no support for traditional theories of secular-  
217 ization (which link decline to changes in income, education, industrialization,  
218 urbanization, and family life). Nor can we attribute much of the observed  
219 decline to growth in the welfare state. But increased school spending by gov-  
220 ernments does reduce church attendance, and this effect is not the result of  
221 greater educational attainment. In shaping the content of schooling, govern-  
222 ments may strongly influence long-run religious trends.’

223 A consequence of this decline (which I do not regret, lest the reader infer otherwise)  
224 has effected a vastly disproportionate emphasis and reliance on physicalism, with

225 extra-scientific philosophical topics being all but entirely marginalized [15]. This is  
226 not merely a blue sky intellectual objection (or should I say a philosophical one?) –  
227 political consequences are serious and frequent. Science cannot, by its very nature,  
228 address questions such as how compromises between two lives can be made, how a  
229 trade-off between the cost of building materials and the safety of future residents should  
230 be made, and a plethora of others encountered each day [36]. Not only important,  
231 these are issues which are difficult to address in a systematic and rigorous way,  
232 which requires years of training – again, training which few undergo to virtually any  
233 degree. Thus, it is imperative to make efforts to explain the limitations of the scientific  
234 method [16], promote philosophy as a useful – *nae*, *necessary* [6] – tool in politics [30],  
235 and as before highlight that the general public cannot be expected to be sufficiently  
236 qualified in this domain [23].

#### 237 **4 The role of AI**

238 Having considered in the previous sections the reasons why a transition from demo-  
239 cratic (or at least nominally so, as I argued) to alternative forms of government is  
240 desirable, as well as what the key obstacles to making this change are, we are in a  
241 good position to discuss what this means in the context of AI, i.e. both how and if AI  
242 can contribute to making the aforementioned change successful and lasting, and what  
243 (if any) changes to the manner AI is governed may be needed. Thus, here I would like  
244 to begin by considering the two questions separately: (i) the role of AI in making the  
245 transition from democracy, and (ii) the place of AI following the transition.

#### 246 4.1 Moving away from democracy

247 In the previous section, we saw that the nearly universal acceptance of democracy and  
248 the outright rejection of even the mere consideration of alternatives, is rooted partly  
249 in a lack of knowledge but perhaps even more so in value based perceptions (e.g. the  
250 association of one’s intrinsic value as a human being, or indeed a sentient being more  
251 generally, and the person’s role in the political system). Changing these is far from an  
252 easy task – often requiring considerable time and demanding patience in a struggle  
253 against *ad hominem* and straw man arguments – and I very much doubt that there is  
254 anything inherent to AI that could make a fundamental difference to this process. In  
255 other words, AI may make the process more convenient, accessible, or engaging, i.e.  
256 offer quantitative change, but no qualitatively different, groundbreaking solution to the  
257 challenge should be expected from it. The focus should be on leveraging the strengths  
258 of AI to shift the so-called ‘window of political possibilities’ [7]. Indeed, considering  
259 that intellectual challenges to democracy are so rare, to the best of my knowledge,  
260 the present article is the first one to consider the potential role of AI in transition  
261 from democracy. A good illustration of what a taboo this very suggestion is, comes  
262 in the form of a principle from the Montréal Declaration for Responsible AI, entitled  
263 “Democratic participation principle” which states that artificial intelligence systems  
264 “must be subjected to **democratic** [my emphasis] scrutiny, debate, and control”.

265 Before I venture any further into the territory which is doubtlessly speculative,  
266 I would like to remind the reader that the main purpose of the present article is to  
267 put forward a proposal and an argument as regards the direction of effort in the use  
268 of AI in the context of democratic governance, that is, the goals rather than means

269 of achieving these. Considering that my expertise does not lie in the use of AI for  
270 knowledge or understanding transfer, I think that there is limited value in my thoughts  
271 on the matter. I am confident that there is a proverbial army of people who can come  
272 up with far more innovative and effective ideas in this realm than myself but for the  
273 sake of completeness I would like to plant a seed by suggesting a few which readily  
274 spring to mind and which may prove useful.

275 Having said the above, one avenue that comes to mind immediately could be  
276 categorized under the broad umbrella of ‘gamification’ [26]. It is easy to envisage,  
277 let us call them games, simulating processes such as political decision-making in  
278 differently constituted parliaments with the ‘player’ working with and against intelli-  
279 gent actors whose values, motives, and behaviours are driven by a learning AI. This  
280 could bring into light many of the issues previously discussed, e.g. how different  
281 organizational systems constrain power or facilitate consensus, how the distorting  
282 effects of selfishness are exhibited in various settings, etc. Alternatively, the same can  
283 be done in simulating the impact of different decisions on the social level, with AI  
284 used to model the behaviour of the public, which affects and is affected by electoral  
285 results, etc. As a caveat, it is important to be aware of potential pitfalls [39] and in  
286 particular ensure that the eye is firmly on the actual goal, and not trivialize important  
287 matters, turning the end product into mere entertainment.

#### 288 4.2 AI within the alternative system of government

289 Unlike in the previous case, when our concern was the role of AI in making a political  
290 transition, the discussion of which is entirely absent in the current literature, when it

291 comes to the consideration of AI within a system of government which we desire to  
292 maintain and strengthen, we are on a somewhat more familiar territory. While it is true  
293 that the literature thus far focuses on the aforementioned goals within the democratic  
294 system only, many of the same aims and concerns remain unchanged in alternative  
295 systems (at least in those of the kind which I would consider advocating and which I  
296 would like to see discussed more widely).

297       Considering the our ever greater reliance on AI and the increasing delegation of  
298 decisions which would have traditionally been made by humans, to AI, I would err if I  
299 did not touch upon the possibility of AI being *directly* involved in our political systems,  
300 i.e. of AI itself making some legislative decisions. I trust that at least with this point I  
301 am on safe ground when I say that such suggestions should be firmly rejected (that is,  
302 as long as we are talking about non-sentient AI; the development of sentient AI, which  
303 I would not welcome on ethical grounds, would demand that this question is revisited).  
304 As I noted earlier, while there is no doubt that the relevant knowledge, understanding,  
305 and reasoning skills, all of which are necessary for meaningful political engagement,  
306 are woefully lacking in the general public – and AI already exceeds human capacity  
307 in regard to these in many specialist areas [5], and can be reasonably expected to do  
308 so in many more in future – political decision-making is at every stage intricately  
309 interwoven with ethical, value based judgements which cannot even in principle be  
310 formalized [1] (in no small part because our belief systems are internally inconsistent;  
311 the very simple example of Arrow’s impossibility theorem [3] should be enough for  
312 one to imagine the actual complexity of making consistent political judgements in the  
313 real world).

314 Having rejected direct involvement of AI, we are in the familiar territory of the  
315 kinds of discussion which have been taking place for a while now. Issues such as  
316 privacy (including security and data provenance) [21,27], transparency and explain-  
317 ability [32,42], decisional autonomy [17,27,38], monopoly over developments in  
318 AI [32], legislators' expertise [32], bias [33], and numerous others are hotly debated  
319 in academia, industry, legislature, and mainstream and alternative media, and they are  
320 not *sui generis* to democracy. While it is outside the scope of the present article to  
321 discuss these issues in detail (and I should note that I do find myself in disagreement,  
322 if not with conclusions then with the form of the arguments put forward in many  
323 of the papers I cited), their nature in large part transcends the specifics of political  
324 governance (again, with an understanding that we are constraining our discussion to  
325 the political alternatives of the kind I suggested, rejecting e.g. tyranny, etc.), and thus  
326 in an alternative system of governance their role remains largely unaltered from that  
327 which they have in democracies.

328 Take privacy for example, and with it the family of issues which fall within the  
329 broad cluster of related considerations. Our collective desire to protect individuals'  
330 right to privacy is first and foremost motivated by what we all but universally feel is  
331 a part of our self<sup>4</sup> [31], and hence something that we deem a universal right (there  
332 should never be any doubt that the recognition of this right *is* a decision, rather than  
333 an expression of some objective truth). This principle is not altered with the change of  
334 a political governance model within which it exists. At the same time, the ability of

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<sup>4</sup> At the same time, it should be noted that this nearly universal agreement regards the principle in rather vague terms. Defining the term with any precision while maintaining this consensus has proven to be a challenge in practice [38].



335 individuals to protect their privacy is also important in preventing any sound political  
336 system from being perverted (e.g. by compromising individuals' autonomy within the  
337 system).

338 As regards the underpinning principles, many similar remarks to those made  
339 about privacy also apply to issues related to autonomy. However, there are some  
340 interesting considerations pertaining to the concept of individual autonomy which  
341 do emerge as we move away from democratic societies. The reader will recall my  
342 objection to the professionalisation of politics from Section 2.2, and the distortion of  
343 the decision-making process which it effects. This distortion results from what can be  
344 seen as a loss of autonomy – political decisional autonomy is traded off for greater  
345 job security, the opportunity to make a difference in future, etc. It is self-evident that  
346 this distorting pressure is lessened (I have little doubt that its complete elimination,  
347 and that of the variety of sources it can emerge from, is impossible whatever the  
348 political structure may be) when legislators are not democratically elected. But even in  
349 admissible non-democratic systems of government, the right to autonomy in political  
350 decision-making on the level of an individual remains of paramount importance. In  
351 particular, one should be under no illusion that there is a form of government perfectly  
352 resilient to human folly. Therefore there must remain a legal and orderly mechanism  
353 for an extraordinary suspension of the normal governing structures, e.g. by means of  
354 spontaneously evoked referenda, similar in nature to Federal Popular Initiatives in  
355 Switzerland [40], initiated by members of the public. For this mechanism to serve its  
356 intended purpose, a number of prerequisites for political decision-making autonomy  
357 have to be ensured. Amongst these I would include the right to free speech and the

358 right to education<sup>5</sup>, amongst others. The legitimacy of any government must, in one  
359 form or another, come from the people that it governs. The reader should not be under  
360 the misapprehension that this is not possible in non-democratic societies; quite in fact,  
361 I would consider it a requirement for a system to be admissible to consideration. As in  
362 many other instances, the potential of AI both as an ally and an adversary has been  
363 recognized. There is, for example, no doubt that AI can be used to improve the quality  
364 and reach of education delivery [8]. However, it is the concerns over the capacity of AI  
365 to undermine autonomy which largely dominate the debate, both within and without  
366 academia [32, 27, 13]. These concerns were made – the reader will not be surprised to  
367 hear so at this point – with the mechanistically and unquestioningly taken presumption  
368 which I highlighted right at the start of the present article, that the context is that of a  
369 democratic political system and that this system is indeed desirable [37]. One of the  
370 reasons why AI poses threat in this context stems from its ability to amplify many  
371 of the inherent flaws of democracies which I highlighted in Section 2. It is again the  
372 case that we are not yet dealing with any *sui generis* aspects of AI but rather with a  
373 change in scale; quantity rather than quality. Take so-called “fake news” for example.  
374 It is hardly a new phenomenon – there are plenty of examples of it to be found on

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<sup>5</sup> The details pertaining to these are well beyond the scope of the present article. However, for clarity, it is worth making a couple of notes. Firstly, my use of the word ‘right’ is different in the two prerequisites mentioned. In the case of free speech, the right is a guarantee against persecution by state but does not imply a guarantee of a platform (or indeed, a lack of legal, social consequences). In contrast, the right to education should, in my opinion, entail more. The weakest interpretation thereof is the right not to be refused education. A stronger understanding of the right would be to understand it as a guarantee of education, whatever one’s circumstances. I would argue for the latter – and more, a *requirement* of a certain level of education. Without it, individual autonomy in political decision-making can only be illusory.

375 ancient Roman Imperial coins, or in history of the Achaemenid Empire, to give just a  
376 couple of examples. What AI made possible, of course with the complex facilitatory  
377 infrastructure underlying it, is to increase the reach of false information (speed of  
378 spread, rate of generation, etc.), while maintaining its specificity and personalization.  
379 While misinformation being spread cannot be welcome in any political system, it  
380 is particularly damaging in democracies because it targets the primary agents from  
381 whom political decision-making starts. And these agents are rather easy to manipulate,  
382 for reasons related to education, ability, etc. I outlined in Section 3.

## 383 **5 Conclusion**

384 The progress made in artificial intelligence technology over the last decade has been  
385 nothing short of staggering. Considering that artificial intelligence – its nature and  
386 the potential for the good and the sinister – has been a topic of serious discussion  
387 since the earliest days of modern computers, it is rather ironic that the aforementioned  
388 progress caught many on the back foot. On the one hand, the benefits of AI are  
389 difficult to overlook, so it is of little surprise that AI is rapidly finding its use in so  
390 many aspects of our lives. Considering its power (already realized or potential), it  
391 is equally unsurprising that AI is having effects on our systems of governance, and  
392 in this there is possible danger. Hence, a lot has already been said and written about  
393 the manner in which artificial intelligence and its developments should be regulated  
394 or otherwise directed so as to protect, strengthen, or maintain modern democracies.  
395 In the present article I made a radical departure from the published scholarly work.  
396 Firstly, I challenged the presumption that democracy is at all desirable and described a

397 number of its serious, fundamental flaws. Hence, I argued that the focus of AI in this  
398 realm should rather be to facilitate a transition from modern (nominal) democracies  
399 to alternative forms of government which comprise a mixture of democratic and non-  
400 democratic elements. I elucidated the key obstacles to this process and identified what  
401 the focus points of AI should be so that they can be overcome. Finally, I discussed  
402 what role AI should play both in the aforementioned political transition as well as in  
403 a society governed by an acceptable alternative political model of the kind which I  
404 argue for.

405 In closing, as the reader reflects on my arguments, I stress that while my ultimate  
406 desire is to have the reader fully convinced of the soundness of my proposals, I would  
407 be content with achieving a much more modest goal of making it understood that  
408 non-democratic governance can be founded on philanthropic, compassionate, and  
409 humanistic grounds (rather than on selfishness, subjugation, and nihilism), and as such  
410 a topic which is not summarily and unthinkingly rejected by emotive cliché charges of  
411 “extremism”, “elitism”, and the like.

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## 494 **A Common criticisms and my responses**

495 In view of the nature of my arguments and proposals, and the social context in which they  
496 are put forward, it is of no surprise to me that they are often faced with what I would de-  
497 scribe as reflexive opposition. In considering the objections of those who read this article  
498 before its publication, including several of my colleagues and of course the anonymous  
499 reviewers, I found that a number of misunderstandings recurred, so I thought that it would  
500 be wise to address them here, in the hope that they will clarify my ideas and prevent fu-  
501 ture misinterpretations of the same (n.b. the questions included are faithfully quoted, with  
502 possible minor editorial ‘tidying up’ having been done).

503

504 *Objection: Democracy has had many positive effects worldwide.*

505 **Response:** This is stated as a self-evident fact, without the claimant feeling any need  
506 to support it. It is also lacking in specificity. Over what did democracy have many positive  
507 effects? Tyranny? That much is reasonably uncontentious; however, it is for the same rea-  
508 son all but entirely irrelevant to the present discussion. Also, disentangling the effects of  
509 democracy from many other social and economic (amongst others) changes not inherently  
510 predicated on democratic governance is far from a trivial task, especially considering that  
511 democracy, in its modern understanding, is a rather new form of governance.

512

513 *Objection: Why not simply focus on remediating the flaws to improve democracy vs.*  
514 *an alternative or mixed model?*

515 **Response:** The limitations I highlight emerge from the very nature of modern democ-  
516 racies, which is why a major structural change, rather than a remediating adjustment, is



517 needed.

518

519 *Objection: What assurances do we have that we would preserve what is not flawed?*

520 Response: As in any complex, practical problem, there can be no apodictic certainty  
521 here either. Using this argument against a change would be to deny the power of reason –  
522 I can never be certain of the effects of my actions, but understanding and reason provide  
523 me with a solid basis for making justifiable predictions about them.

524

525 *Objection: Assuming the public suffers from “superficiality, lack of education, and*  
526 *intellectual inertia” and that this allows for “de facto oligarchies,” how would an alter-*  
527 *native government model solve for that? Evidence suggests that, in contrast to democracy,*  
528 *a culture of entitlement (socialism, communism, et al) exploits this weakness of humanity.*

529 There is a major leap of logic here, namely that any deviation from democracy implies  
530 ‘a culture of entitlement’.

531 Please allow me to take a step back for a moment. My foremost goal with this article is  
532 to bring to the fore the idea that democracy, that is the very idea and the structure, should  
533 be challenged and not presumed to be inherently good and desirable (this assumption is  
534 also readily seen in claims of attempts to “democratize” just about everything – in some  
535 cases when this concept makes no sense, in others when the potential benefits are even  
536 less clear than in the context of social governance – from the internet and the academia,  
537 over school curricula and the media, to data and AI). One does not necessarily need to  
538 agree with me with the end goal of the transition which I suggest, to agree with the former  
539 objective. As I state in the main article, my primary aim is to shift the ‘window of political  
540 possibilities’.

541 Having said the above, I will also stress that I did and do not deny the utility of demo-  
542 cratic decision-making in every context. Quite on the contrary, I explicitly state that the  
543 mixed model that I think we should be thinking about, does include democratic elements.

544

545

546 *Objection: One cannot legitimately compare voter eligibility of an adult to an infant,*  
547 *and the rights of each as sentient beings. Defenders of free and fair elections with equality*  
548 *“at the ballot box” do so to promote individual liberty. Under what conditions, is it pos-*  
549 *sible to justify compromising the liberties/silencing the voices of sound adults who could,*  
550 *but are not allowed to participate in determining their own governments?*

551 I fully agree that “one cannot legitimately compare voter eligibility of an adult to  
552 an infant” which is precisely why I used this example, so I think that my point is being  
553 missed here.

554 Why cannot we legitimate compare voter eligibility of an adult to a child? Take a  
555 severely mentally retarded adult. Clearly, this is not the adult that you had in mind, you  
556 will say. Indeed, hence the subsequent change to “*sound* adult”. The point here is that we  
557 are dealing with an intensive quality, i.e. something that has degrees. Eligibility should  
558 thus be predicated both on certain intelligence criteria and knowledge criteria, and both  
559 of these come in degrees. Importantly, notice that neither has inherently anything to do  
560 with one’s “value” as an individual, which is what I was addressing, i.e. saying that one is  
561 less intelligent (for whatever reason, be it because they are a child or mentally retarded)  
562 or less educated, in no way implies that they are “less valued as individuals”.

563 You state (entirely correctly, to be clear) that “one cannot legitimately compare voter  
564 eligibility of an adult to an infant”. Indeed. Yet, this is not something that is immediately,

565 *prima facie* evident. No, it is a *conclusion* that we arrive through the employment of rea-  
566 son and, more precisely, the consideration of the criteria that we recognize as relevant to  
567 the problem at hand. In short, the issue is that of competence, and for a variety of sci-  
568 entific and philosophical reasons, we conclude that children ought not to participate in  
569 voting. The issue is the same when comparing adults. I am far from the first or lone voice  
570 in recognizing this – the same point has been made at least as far back as Plato, as well  
571 as by very different thinkers such as Kant and even Kierkegaard. It is interesting to note  
572 the wording form of your challenge too. Phrases such as “compromising the liberties”,  
573 “silencing the voices” are highly emotionally charged, and together with the expression  
574 “not allowed to participate in determining their own governments” presume the right to  
575 vote as the default state. Why should that be? Are we asked why, say, we are “not allowed  
576 to participate in determining which drugs are available in our own national health care  
577 systems”? Of course not, for we recognize the importance of competence in this context.  
578 How is it that political decision-making, underlain by so many multidisciplinary consid-  
579 erations, is not seen in the same light?

580

581 *Objection: Political decisions may be complex. The populace may be under-educated.*  
582 *Neither of these leads us to conclude that it would be better for citizens to have fewer elec-*  
583 *toral choices. So-called experts are fallible, biased, and often make unprincipled choices.*  
584 *It is not necessarily true to say that expert decisions are not subject to popular vote. They*  
585 *are, via transparency, both to other experts who may have differing views and non-experts*  
586 *who may have novel ideas.*

587 I rather agree with everything stated above, so it seems to me that there is no expres-  
588 sion of disagreement here (which is fine, of course). To make this perfectly clear, apropos

589 of the first point above, please note that nowhere do I make the inference you (rightfully)  
590 object to. Also, I fully agree that “so-called experts are fallible, biased, and often make  
591 unprincipled choices” but again, I also never suggest anything like “that expert decisions  
592 are not subject to popular vote”. It seems to me that my arguments regarding *necessary*  
593 conditions are read as being claims regarding *sufficient* conditions.

594 *Objection: The decline of religiosity can be shown to correlate not only to science/physicalism*  
595 *but also to social cohesiveness and institutions, moral choices, self-accountability, et al.*  
596 *The absolutely abhorrent, intolerant behavior we see online (and increasingly in the pub-*  
597 *lic square) is not only an abuse of free speech, but also a decline in shared moral values.*  
598 *To say that “the general public cannot be expected to be sufficiently qualified” in philos-*  
599 *ophy is to deny human potential.*

600 I am not quite sure what to make out of the claim that “To say that “the general public  
601 cannot be expected to be sufficiently qualified” in philosophy is to deny human potential.”  
602 Firstly, clearly I am not denying *all* human potential for philosophical decision-making.  
603 That would be absurd and entirely incoherent with the scientific understanding of the  
604 origins of morality, say. But you would, I am sure, equally agree that this potential is not  
605 infinite. Hence, we always need to talk about the extent of this potential (and the degree to  
606 which we can expect it to be attained in the context of the real world and its many facets)  
607 and there is nothing that makes it obvious (quite on the contrary, I argue throughout)  
608 that the potential, at least in practice, extends far enough for the increasingly complex  
609 landscape of philosophical challenges faced today.

610 Moreover, your objection is unclear in its use of the word “human”. Are you claiming  
611 that I am denying this capacity to all humans (I certainly am not)? Or to most humans?  
612 Some humans?

613 It seems to me that there is at least an element discomfort in recognizing that humans  
614 vary greatly in their cognitive ability, and that academics, say, are at the far end of the  
615 tail of this distribution – a fear of being accused of ‘elitism’, succinctly (and possibly  
616 an expression of something similar to survivor’s guilt, as discussed amongst others by  
617 Coleman Hughes and Jordan Peterson). This is related to some of the important points  
618 I made in my submission. Consider the word ‘elite’ and the different ways it can be  
619 used and understood. One would be exemplified by a statement such as: ‘Usein Bolt is  
620 an elite sprinter’. It is an observational, scientific statement, void of moral connotation.  
621 When one talks of ‘political elites’, the word takes on a rather different meaning, with  
622 a distinctly sinister tone. At the root of this is what I talk about in the main text, that is  
623 the societal (especially amongst the intellectual classes) appreciation of intellect which  
624 unduly transcends its instrumental value and conflates it with an intangible worth of a  
625 human being. I very much object to this – I do not think that intelligent or educated  
626 people should be considered more valuable (other than in the purely instrumental sense,  
627 where applicable) than one less so, no more than do I consider it acceptable to consider  
628 an individual gifted to run fast as more valuable than one not endowed with this gift. The  
629 issue, as discussed earlier, is that of required competence, which is amoral in nature.