
1. What is “the real world of democracy”?
2. Who has a “genuine historical claim to the title ['democracy']”? What makes it a “historical claim”? Why is it even important to ask this question?
3. Which socio-economic system necessarily underpins “liberal democracy”?
4. The liberal state and liberal society are to be distinguished from democracy and equality. Why? What defines the “liberal society”?
5. From “non-liberal democracy” Macpherson posits that “democracy” and “dictatorship” are not necessarily polar opposites. How does he explain that?
6. Note the distinction Macpherson draws between the “narrow” conception of democracy (a system of government), and the “broader” conception (a type of society).
7. How is the concept of democracy in many of the so-called newly “independent underdeveloped countries” (the “Third World”) different from either Marxist or capitalist ideas of democracy? Likewise, why is “strong political leadership” (what many in the West today would call “authoritarianism”) necessary?
8. What makes the one-party state not just “apt” but “irresistible” in so many countries that have experienced revolutions against foreign rule?
9. Democracy as being about *ends* and as a *producer’s good*. How does these qualities differ from liberal-democracy?
10. How is “liberal-democracy” a “system of power”?


1. Is the “anthropology of democracy” a long-established field of inquiry, or is it a new and emergent one?
2. What can anthropologists contribute to the study of democracy?
3. Should the anthropology of democracy turns its attention equally to the US and EU, and if so, why?
4. How is democracy defined in this article?
5. Compare Paley’s “different systems of democracy” to Macpherson's overview.
6. Is there evidence to suggest that Paley is emphasizing democracy as a method?
7. Does the fact that democracies “enact power” subtract from democratic ideals, in Paley’s view? How does that compare to Macpherson?
8. In anthropologists’ early work on democracy in the 1960s, did their treatment of “democracy” reflect what Paley said could be anthropologists' contributions to the
study of democracy?
9. Which institutions and actors, in which contexts, conceived of “democracy” in a singular, universal form?
10. Does growing anthropological recognition of diversity in democratization see this diversity as springing from internal or external sources?
11. Note Paley's reflex: a one-party state is first assumed to be anti-democratic. Compare this with Macpherson's analysis.
12. When Paley finally focuses on “different definitions of democracy,” note the examples and compare them with Macpherson’s outline.
13. What are some of the ways by which “democracy” can be indisputably appropriated and applied towards anti-democratic ends?
14. How can democratic procedures unleash violence? How is this understanding shaped by an acknowledgment of “primordialism” and the study of ethnicity?
15. Note: “what comes before transitions to democracy shapes what comes after them”. Then what does “transition” mean?
16. Has Paley muddied the waters by introducing “transition” as a competing term with “democracy”? Would a term like “democratization” require thinking in terms of “transitions”? Is ethnography really necessary to understand the problems ensuing from the idea of “transitions”?
17. What is a “disjunctive democracy”?
18. How significant are elections for the practice of democracy?
19. How are sovereignty, citizenship, and democracy interlocked?
20. How are “civil society” and NGOs connected to particular ideas of democracy?
21. What are the impacts of neoliberalism on democratization? Make a note of “participation,” “empowerment,” “partnerships,” “self-care”.
22. Does Paley refer to Macpherson’s work at any point? Does she mention other political scientists in her article?