I affirm: Resolved: In a democracy, a free press ought to prioritize objectivity over advocacy.

# My value is democracy

**Harrison**

Harrison, Ross. “Democracy.” *Democracy - Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, www.rep.routledge.com/articles/thematic/democracy/v-1/sections/the-value-of-democracy.

Once we have an idea of democracy, the next question is why, or whether, it is of value. The Greek historians identified the original introduction of democracy with the advance of liberty and equality. Since both liberty and equality are usually thought to be of value, this would seem to be a natural answer to the question. Democracy is of value because it produces liberty and equality. With dictatorship or other forms of special leadership, a particular person or group has more power than others. By contrast, in democracy everyone is equal. Everyone has the same (political) power. So democracy is egalitarian as compared with other forms of government or decision making.

## My Value Criterion is consequentialism

#### **O*nly* pleasure and pain are intrinsically valuable. All other values can be explained with reference to pleasure.**

**Moen 16** [Ole Martin Moen, **Research Fellow in Philosophy** at University of Oslo “An Argument for Hedonism” **Journal of Value Inquiry** (Springer), 50 (2) 2016: 267–281]

I think several things should be said in response to Moore’s challenge to hedonists. First, I do not think the burden of proof lies on hedonists to explain why the additional values are not intrinsic values. If someone claims that X is intrinsically valuable, this is a substantive, positive claim, and it lies on him or her to explain why we should believe that X is in fact intrinsically valuable. Possibly, this could be done through thought experiments analogous to those employed in the previous section. Second, there is something peculiar about the list of additional intrinsic values that counts in hedonism’s favor: the listed values have a strong tendency to be well explained as things that help promote pleasure and avert pain. To go through Frankena’s list, life and consciousness are necessary presuppositions for pleasure; activity, health, and strength bring about pleasure; and happiness, beatitude, and contentment are regarded by Frankena himself as “pleasures and satisfactions.” The same is arguably true of beauty, harmony, and “proportion in objects contemplated,” and also of affection, friendship, harmony, and proportion in life, experiences of achievement, adventure and novelty, self-expression, good reputation, honor and esteem. Other things on Frankena’s list, such as understanding, wisdom, freedom, peace, and security, although they are perhaps not themselves pleasurable, are important means to achieve a happy life, and as such, they are things that hedonists would value highly. Morally good dispositions and virtues, cooperation, and just distribution of goods and evils, moreover, are things that, on a collective level, contribute a happy society, and thus the traits that would be promoted and cultivated if this were something sought after. To a very large extent, the intrinsic values suggested by pluralists tend to be hedonic instrumental values. Indeed, pluralists’ suggested intrinsic values all point toward pleasure, for while the other values are reasonably explainable as a means toward pleasure, pleasure itself is not reasonably explainable as a means toward the other values. Some have noticed this. Moore himself, for example, writes that though his pluralistic theory of intrinsic value is opposed to hedonism, its application would, in practice, look very much like hedonism’s: “Hedonists,” he writes “do, in general, recommend a course of conduct which is very similar to that which I should recommend.”24 Ross writes that “[i]t is quite certain that by promoting virtue and knowledge we shall inevitably produce much more pleasant consciousness. These are, by general agreement, among the surest sources of happiness for their possessors.”25 Roger Crisp observes that “those goods cited by non-hedonists are goods we often, indeed usually, enjoy.”26 What Moore and Ross do not seem to notice is that their observations give rise to two reasons to reject pluralism and endorse hedonism. The first reason is that if the suggested non-hedonic intrinsic values are potentially explainable by appeal to just pleasure and pain (which, following my argument in the previous chapter, we should accept as intrinsically valuable and disvaluable), then—by appeal to Occam’s razor—we have at least a pro tanto reason to resist the introduction of any further intrinsic values and disvalues. It is ontologically more costly to posit a plurality of intrinsic values and disvalues, so in case all values admit of explanation by reference to a single intrinsic value and a single intrinsic disvalue, we have reason to reject more complicated accounts. The fact that suggested non-hedonic intrinsic values tend to be hedonistic instrumental values does not, however, count in favor of hedonism solely in virtue of being most elegantly explained by hedonism; it also does so in virtue of creating an explanatory challenge for pluralists. The challenge can be phrased as the following question: If the non-hedonic values suggested by pluralists are truly intrinsic values in their own right, then why do they tend to point toward pleasure and away from pain?27

# Contention 1: advocacy journalism threatens democracy

## a. Advocacy journalism has caused a distrust in mainstream media which has led people to seek alternative news sources

**Reavy 2013**

Reavy, Matthew M. “Objectivity and Advocacy in Journalism.” *Media Ethics Magazine*, 2013, https://www.mediaethicsmagazine.com/index.php/browse-back-issues/179-fall-2013-vol-25-no-1/3999003-objectivity-and-advocacy-in-journalism.

Public journalism and, for the most part, citizen journalism can be viewed as examples of *advocacy* journalism, a form of journalism that endeavors to be fact-based, but does not separate editorial opinion from news coverage and often approaches the news from a specific viewpoint. Advocacy journalists distinguish the “good guys” from the “bad guys” and “actively participate in the debate, becoming more activists than observers of the events” (Ruigrok, 2010). Thus, they can be said to exhibit the same kind of “interventionist impulse” that scholars such as Hanitzsch (2007, p. 373) see at work in public journalism. Advocacy journalism has been at times credited with everything from combating “the moral failings of Western governments” (Hammond, 2002, p. 178) to offering "a more progressive notion of experts and expertise by citing community members while critiquing or pointedly ignoring dominant discourses from government and academic ‘experts’” (Heitner, 2009, p. 405). It has been tied to peace journalism (Kempf, 2007), “alternative” publications (Waisbord, 2009) and environmental journalism (Waisbord & Peruzzotti, 2009) among others. Some scholars contend that advocacy journalists can be assumed to write from a “leftist” point of view (Craig, 2004, p. 240), often as a counterweight to the “inherently conservative” notion of objectivity (Glasser, 1984, para. 3), which some argue serves as a tool to “help the powerful maintain order” (Ryan, 2009. p. 8). Many other scholars contend that any liberal bias on the part of journalists is more than offset by a conservative bias among owners. For example, Parry (2003) notes that “media owners historically have enforced their political views and other preferences by installing senior editors whose careers depend on delivering a news product that fits with the owner’s prejudices.” Advocacy journalism has been seen at work in mainstream journalism as well (Schultz, 2013). As Downie & Schudson (2009) reported, “in the plurality of the American media universe, advocacy journalism is not endangered—it is growing” (para. 17).

Scholarly investigation into the public’s perception of journalism has tended to focus on media credibility and trust. Early research in this area examined credibility primarily along two fronts: source credibility and medium credibility.

Source credibility studies date back at least to Hovland & Weiss (1951), who examined the impact of “untrustworthy” sources on the reception of content. This research has influenced a wide variety of studies involving sources used by the media into this century. Manning (2001) examined source credibility as an element in political and socio-economic control of the news, finding that mainstream journalists tended to rely upon official or elite sources in their work, thus granting advantages to the powerful. Alternative media may mitigate this effect by making use of sourcing routines that emphasize “ordinary” sources as opposed to those favored by mainstream media (Atton & Wickendon, 2005). Source diversity, *e.g.,* the inclusion of both governmental and non-governmental sources, has been shown to increase perceived credibility of articles about risk issues (Cozma, 2006). It also led to examination of individual journalists as sources themselves (Messner & Distaso, 2008; Phillips, 2010; Nah & Chung, 2012).

In addition to looking at the credibility of journalists as sources, scholars have also examined the trustworthiness of specific media as channels—otherwise known as media credibility. Roper’s (1985) decades-long examination of perceived credibility among radio, television, magazines and newspapers showed that audiences consistently reported television as the medium they would be most inclined to believe when faced with conflicting versions of the same story. That trend began to reverse in recent decades. Kiousis (2001) looked at how audiences perceived news credibility among print, television and online media. The research indicated that media consumers, skeptical of all three media, gave especially low marks to television—a move away from the higher credibility ratings given to television in previous studies (*e.g.,* Gaziano & McGrath, 1986). Others have examined media credibility within the framework of “trust.” Kohring & Matthes (2007) suggested a move away from attempting to assess credibility, which they found theoretically and methodologically troublesome, and toward evaluating “trust.” Their multidimensional scale measures trust in terms of selectivity of topics, selectivity of facts, accuracy of depictions and journalistic assessment such as commentary and explicit calls for action. The move toward trust stems from earlier research by Tsfati & Capella (2003), who found distrust or skepticism of the media correlated negatively and significantly with consumption of mainstream news. Those who distrusted media content were less likely to consume mainstream news and more likely to seek out alternative sources. Additional research by Tsfati (2003) indicated that media skeptics were also less likely to exhibit the effects of agenda-setting than non-skeptics. Media skeptics themselves tended to be more conservative, leading the researcher to question whether those who were more resistant to the agenda-setting effects of the media appeared so because of media skepticism, conservative orientation or some combination of the two. Observations of decreased trust in the media have been supported by numerous surveys conducted in recent years, which continue to show a steep and steady worsening of the public's perception of the media. A 2012 Gallup poll found that 60% of Americans “have little or no trust in the mass media to report the news fully, accurately and fairly” (Morales, 2012). A similar poll by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press [Pew] (2012) showed a sharp fall in media credibility, with every news outlet in the survey experiencing a double-digit drop in believability ratings during the previous decade.

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## b. As distrust in the press rises, echo chambers on the internet grow which is dangerous to individuals’ critical thinking skills

**Paleo Foundation 19**

“Echo Chambers and Why They Are so Dangerous.” *Paleo Foundation*, 13 Aug. 2019, https://paleofoundation.com/why-echo-chambers-are-so-dangerous/.

The term “echo chamber” was originally coined as a figurative description of what happens when an individual or group´s belief systems were reinforced and buttressed by continued communication and repetition within a closed system. While the internet opened up seemingly limitless opportunities for wider access to news and information, it also allowed individuals and groups to select which information they would access. For example, while a simple Google search related to a hot button topic such as Central American migration might allow people to explore a diversity of viewpoints that consider this issue from a variety of angles, the internet also allows people to bunker down and only seek out information that coincides or overlaps with their own belief patterns on any given issue. This closed loop system of information not only reinforces existing views and ideas, but can also lead to [confirmation bias](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Confirmation_bias), [social polarization](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_polarization), and unfortunate examples of [extremism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Extremism). One recent study by the Pew Research Center found that an [estimated 61 percent of Millennials](https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/06/01/political-news-habits-by-generation/) gather their news principally through their social media feeds. Social media, however, is governed by complex algorithms that subsequently dictate what feeds and news items appear as we scroll through our social media channels. These artificial intelligence algorithms are able to pick up on our interest trends and discard information that appears to not fit with our preferences. This is part of the reason why the internet and social media contribute to the ever more prevalent echo chambers and the resulting polarization While the term “echo chamber” was first utilized to denote situations in which closed systems of news media and outlets reinforce existing political and ideological attitudes, echo chambers can be found in organizational settings as well. Already back in 1996, researchers from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) were sending out warnings associated with the potential risks of a world connected by the Internet. [They said](http://web.mit.edu/marshall/www/papers/CyberBalkans.pdf): *Individuals empowered to screen out material that does not conform to their existing preferences may form virtual cliques, insulate themselves from opposing points of view, and reinforce their biases. Internet users can seek out interactions with like-minded individuals who have similar values, and thus become less likely to trust important decisions to people whose values differ from their own.* Most only associate the phenomenon of echo chambers with extremely conservative, nationalist, and xenophobic groups. But it’s easy to find enclaves of insulated, hyper-partisan groups on social media and the internet. And, the same can be said of organizations all across ideological spectrums. Dangers of Echo Chamber One of the biggest dangers and most calamitous aspect of echo chambers is that they tend to lead to a lack of original thoughts, dissenting opinions, and challenging ideas. On an organizational level, this can limit our opportunities for growth and stem healthy and necessary debate. With the sheer amount of information accessible on the internet today, finding “scientific” studies that bolster your own opinion is fairly uncomplicated. The best way, then, to encounter dissenting ideas and beliefs that do not conform to your own point of view is through *actively* seeking out people and groups who candidly disagree with your own perspective Another problem associated with echo chambers within an organization is that they can limit our ability to effectively solve problems and respond to the exact issues that they endeavor to address. The constant and perpetual affirmation of our own beliefs that occurs within an echo chamber obviously causes division and polarization. And, polarized communities and societies lack the social capital that is necessary to work together on shared problems and common issues. For example, the internet has recently been ablaze with impassioned debates between the vegan community and meat eaters in support of regenerative agriculture, over the now-infamous [Impossible Burger](https://paleofoundation.com/impossible-foods-attack/). While the vegan community claims that only a plant-based diet can keep us healthy while simultaneously limiting greenhouse gas emissions associated with the agricultural sector, regenerative farmers, ranchers, and their supporters point to studies that demonstrate the enormous carbon sequestration potential of regenerative grazing and the health of grass fed and free range meat products. Both sides of this debate have zealously quoted seemingly contradictory studies that support their own claims. And thus, the ensuing echo chambers that form in online forums limit our ability to critically evaluate ideas, and unite and work together to find solutions to global problems. We have effectively abandoned all goal-orientation in favor of further fanning flame wars.

## c. democracy collapses when voters are misinformed by alternative news sites

**Hollyer 19**

Hollyer, James R., et al. “Analysis | Fake News Is Bad News for Democracy.” *The Washington Post*, WP Company, 5 Apr. 2019, https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2019/04/05/fake-news-is-bad-news-democracy/.

Last week, Facebook CEO [Mark Zuckerberg](https://www.facebook.com/4/posts/10107013839885441) welcomed government regulation of content on the Internet in several areas, including “election integrity.” Around the world, there are increasing concerns that “[fake news](https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/07/fake-news-threatens-future-uk-democracy-report-180729063712697.html)” threatens democracy. Our [recent research](http://hrvtransparency.org/) supports this view — democracy is less likely to survive in a poor informational environment. [Our book](http://hrvtransparency.org/) shows that when voters are poorly informed, enough voters are more likely to make mistakes at the polls. This leads to the election of incompetent — and perhaps corrupt or self-dealing — governments.

Here’s why this matters: Such outcomes at the polls lower [public confidence](https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/american-political-science-review/article/political-foundations-of-democracy-and-the-rule-of-the-law/564FB92EE1808897FD0041E25289CF1F) in democracy and generate support for emergent [anti-democratic forces](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/ajps.12005).

Unreliable information shapes voter choices Our research focuses on the economy. Voters like a [healthy economy](https://historynewsnetwork.org/article/157825) — and often rely on official pronouncements or publicly available information like jobs data or growth forecasts to decide for themselves how well the economy is doing. This information can be more or less precise or accurate. In a highly transparent society, public pronouncements tend to be on target — the government releases accurate information. Voters then make informed decisions at the polls. They reelect governments that produce solid economic performance and vote out governments that fail to address economic woes. [*Here’s a way you can combat fake news*](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2018/11/08/heres-a-way-you-can-combat-fake-news/?utm_term=.0301dcc3b91f&itid=lk_interstitial_manual_11) When official announcements of economic performance are less trustworthy, voters rely more on their own personal, perhaps idiosyncratic, experience with the economy to make choices at the polls — and are more likely to make collective mistakes. After they see the election results, voters often figure out that [misinformation](https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2019/04/india-misinformation-election-fake-news/586123/) impacted the outcome. Bad information bungles elections If the challenger receives more votes than expected (relative to what the actual state of the economy would have suggested is warranted), the voters are likely to realize they’ve made a collective error. And when incompetent or corrupt governments win reelection, the disappointed public may align with anti-democratic forces.

Our book, “Information, Democracy, and Autocracy,” and a recent [article](https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/british-journal-of-political-science/article/transparency-protest-and-democratic-stability/ECB1EA975C03A03DA66E3957908AE689) present evidence in line with our theory. Using an [original measure](http://hrvtransparency.org/) of the transparency of economic outcomes, we show that democracies with low levels of transparency are less likely to survive. Incumbents are more likely to be removed from office through extra-constitutional means — coups or assassinations — especially when the economy is performing poorly. Highly transparent democracies survive, even under poor economic conditions.

Fake News changes the story Our analysis focuses on credible information governments provide regarding the economy. Yet the world of fake news and social media trolling exacerbates the problems we identify. Ironically, greater connectivity and access to information makes for less transparency. Fake news leads to the dissemination of false narratives, which exposes voters to a “noisier” signal of government performance. If the stories vary widely, voters may not know what to believe or may believe false information. Some individuals may come to believe that others are in thrall to false information and regard their views as illegitimate. In some ways, this noise is similar to situations in which no credible information is available at all.

[*Russia has been meddling in foreign elections for decades. Has it made a difference?*](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2018/01/05/russia-has-been-meddling-in-foreign-elections-for-decades-has-it-made-a-difference/?utm_term=.3534ea220711&itid=lk_interstitial_manual_23)

In such an environment, elections function poorly as a means of removing underperforming politicians. When voters don’t believe the electoral process is working and lose trust in democracy, they may be more likely to encourage violent coups. Or they might even offer popular support as a democratically elected government turns authoritarian by undermining the systems that keep it accountable, such as the rule of law, an independent judiciary or a free press.

# Contention 2: objective journalism is key to saving democracy

**Luo 20**

Luo, Michael. “How Can the Press Best Serve a Democratic Society?” *The New Yorker*, 11 July 2020, https://www.newyorker.com/news/the-future-of-democracy/how-can-the-press-best-serve-democracy.

This is a disorienting, destabilizing moment for members of the press—or, as some have it, the “mainstream media.” The decline of truth in American democracy can feel irreversible, and seem to be the product of forces that extend far beyond journalism. But any hope of halting that decline must begin with a renewal of journalism’s commitment to its public responsibility, and with an examination of how its methods might best adapt to new circumstances. The continuing need for what the Hutchins Commission described as a “truthful, comprehensive, and intelligent account of the day’s events in a context which gives them meaning” should mean a rededication to Lippmann’s ideal of objectivity—a scrupulous, evidence-based approach to reporting. But, at a moment when common ground is disappearing, it also demands a greater awareness of how journalistic conventions of all kinds can distort coverage.