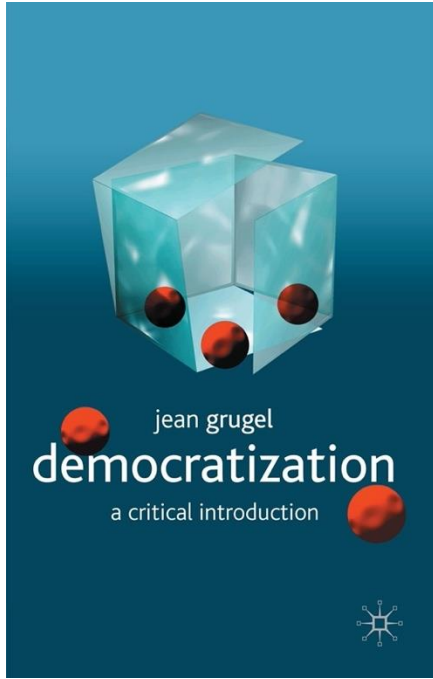


BOOK REVIEW

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Book Title: Democratization: A Critical Introduction

Author: Jean Grugel

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Jean Grugel (2001) devotes her book, *Democratization: A Critical Introduction*, to comprehensively account for democratization. Her primary focus is the process of democratization while at the same time elaborating on the concept of democracy in a broad sense. Thus, her book is, as the name suggests, an introduction to the debate on democracy. The concept of democracy is discussed within a general framework covering social, political, and economic changes as multi-dimensional explanations. However, the cultural dimension is fragile in the whole debate. In other words, considering that democracy is the natural result of social, historical, and cultural developments, the cultural dimension stands out as a significant shortcoming. Because it is clear that the historical process accelerated by the Enlightenment in the cultural field and the Industrial Revolution in the economic field led the individual who reasons and has rational expectations, and the social groups she/he is in, to think about the content and concrete meanings of the concepts and to produce concrete demands. To put it briefly, as Robert Dahl (1993) states, democracy has developed over the centuries and is fed from different sources. However, the case studies are also valuable for making the argument appear more concrete, although the information is very selective. As an excellent example of an introductory book on democratization, she puts forward different theories of democratization and sets her own alternative model. The fact that democracy has gained universal sympathy,

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and even dictators claim that they are democrats when they are stuck, does not mean that all political systems have come to terms with these fundamental values (Sartori, 1996). Events in many parts of the world show that democracy as a shared value and ideal cannot easily prevail.

Democracy is the only model based on the least coercion and the most consent among all administration models. Therefore, democratic administrations inevitably find themselves faced with certain paradoxes and contradictions. It is not easy to soften and reconcile the tensions created by them. Every country that wants to have a democratic administration needs to find a way to make it happen for itself (Diamond, 1995). What is meant here is not that each country understands and implements democracy on its terms. The point is that each country will find the conditions and methods for establishing, implementing, surviving, and protecting the universal principles of democracy. Creating democratization at universal standards will be realized by each country's own methods.

In the first six chapters of the book, she draws up the theoretical picture of democratization processes. Then, she moves on to the case studies, namely Southern Europe, Latin America, Africa, post-communist countries, and Asia. In my opinion, the most significant and valuable part of the book is in which approaches to democratization are evaluated one by one. She successfully categorizes these approaches in two sets: structuralist and agency approach. Modernization school and historical sociology (referring to "structuralism") are considered structuralist, and transition school is classified as an agency approach.

Moreover, she sets three dimensions of alternative focus: state, civil society and globalization. To put it in other words, Grugel identifies all previous approaches in a comprehensive manner so as to make a complete account of the subject matter, i.e. democratization. However, she also reaches her own conclusion and alternative approach by avoiding weaknesses of previous approaches and gathering the strengths of all.

At this point, it would be appropriate to summarize Grugel's own approach. For her, the aim of previous approaches was on causation but not on consolidation. Thus she wants to explain democratization historically by taking into account both historical sociology and transition perspective. The former emphasizes structures while the latter considers the role of human behavior. However, for Grugel, democratization requires the collective action of classes or social movements more than the participation of individuals. This leads to the substantive understanding of democracy in which there are three dimensions outlined above: state, civil society and globalization. In this sense, a solution to "stateness problem" is essential. Also, attention must be paid to the role of mass participation and the struggles for rights and citizenship. In addition to these, since globalization is an expression of a power relationship, it has impacts on actors in various ways. Thus, the role of the global dimension varies from one case of democratization to the other. However, her theorization falls short of a whole encompassing explanation. There are some contradictory cases. For example, the transition to democracy in southern Europe can be seen as very successful due to the states' capacity to control the domestic economy in the 1970s predominantly. However, this explanation has nothing to do with the current or recent situations since globalization functions in the opposite direction. There is no point in comparing southern Europe with sub-Saharan Africa having transitions in the 1990s on these grounds. This means that her theory has some problems in encircling all the cases. Despite this contradiction, she shows her competence in southern European cases and a sound explanation of post-Soviet transitions and failures.

I find her explanations on Latin American and African cases very reductionist and limited since she perceives democratization for the former as elite-driven and externally driven for the latter.

In addition to that, lack of competence in Africa could be easily sorted out as she disregards or pays insufficient attention to ethnic divisions in African nation-states. The issue of ethnicity for Africa is also a point that could be depicted as an example of inconsistency in Grugel's book. To be more specific, she touches upon this issue in a general discussion on indigenous movements (Grugel, 2001, p. 110). However, she forgets all about it in her specific explanation of Africa. In relation to Asia, she highlights the "retreat of authoritarianism" and perceives democratization as an option for the future due to economic growth and development. This perception seems to be very much inspired by Huntington, who approaches economic development as the leading factor of political change, i.e. democratization. The army's role may be added to the picture for some cases, but it is also lacking.

There is a different aspect for the assertion in every case, such as elite bargaining for Latin America, external forces for Africa, modernization for Asia, etc. This leads to the conclusion that there is no best framework covering all of the cases. From my point of view, the most salient weakness of Grugel is the lack of a general theory to explain social phenomena as a whole. But this is not peculiar to her. On the contrary, the lack of a general theory is the primary source of problems in social sciences in recent years.

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