Political Theory

Jeffrey Green's The Eyes of the People: Democracy in an Age of Spectatorship

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What is This?

Symposium: Edited by Richard Avramenko and Melissa Schwartzberg

Jeffrey E. Green's *The Eyes of the People: Democracy in an Age of Spectatorship* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010, ISBN 9780195372649, Hardback, 296 pages, $49.95)

Jeffrey Green's *The Eyes of the People* (*EOP*) outlines a basic distinction between two models of popular power in a democracy. On the one hand, there is what Green calls the v*ocal model*, which has dominated the way popular power has been conceptualized since the rebirth of democracy at the end of the eighteenth century. According to this model, the People is understood as a legislative voice—as a set of preferences waiting to be translated into laws and policies. *EOP* demonstrates that despite the diversity of approaches to democratic theory, the vocal model has informed virtually all philosophies of democracy. For example, it informs not only democratic idealists of the nineteenth century, like Mill and Tocqueville, but equally contemporary models (like aggregationists and deliberative democrats) who, even if more skeptical about popular self-legislation in any simplistic sense, continue to envision the People as a vocal, decisional force. The problem with the vocal model, Green explains, is twofold: failing to account for the fact that most citizens most of the time are not engaged in political decision making, it is disconnected from reality; second, it is hegemonic because, leading ordinary citizens to exaggerate their political capacity, it blinds them to the distinction between an elite with special decision-making authority and the great many without power. It is not surprising, then, as Green notes, that the very notion of the People has come under pressure in recent years, as numerous scholars of democracy (e.g., pluralists), unwilling to treat the People as a monolithic vocal being, have argued for jettisoning the concept altogether.

But rather than abandon the idea of the People, Green develops a competing model of popular power, which he calls the *ocular model*—or also the *plebiscitary model.* Within the ocular model, the People—the mass of everyday citizens in their collective capacity—is conceived as a spectating rather than decision-making being: it watches leaders and other elites who appear on the public stage. If the central ideal of the vocal model is autonomy (the People's self-authorship of the laws), the central ideal of the ocular model is

candor. Green argues for a model in which leaders do not fully control the conditions of their public appearances that are thus shaped by unscripted, spontaneous, unpredictable, non-acclamatory events.

The Eyes of the People argues that citizens should treat the candor of their leaders as a key criterion in evaluating how democratic their societies are and that, therefore, citizens should find democratization realized not only in the content of political decision making but in the *form* of political communication. While Green does not deny that certain individuals and groups are in fact able to influence policy, the book defends the ocular ideal of candor as an undertheorized, if not overlooked, democratic value that is uniquely responsive to everyday political experiences.

Superhuman Vision: Beyond the Gaze

Melissa Schwartzberg, New York University

The *Eyes of the People* is a major accomplishment. Jeffrey Green eloquently characterizes the nature of political citizenship in modern democracies and provides theoretical guidance for how to think about democratic commitments when voting is "the rarest and most exceptional moment of democratic life" (Green 2010, 199). As Green rightly argues, the normal mode of political life for the vast majority of citizens is "characterized by silence rather than decision, spectatorship rather than activism, and hierarchy rather than equality" (Green, 199). Green's view is unromantic, even deflationary—and unmistakably correct. Further, that candor—"the institutional norm that a leader not be in control of the conditions of his or her publicity" (Green, 130)—should serve as a critical ideal within such democracies is an important and persuasive claim.

Yet my fear is that Green's ocular model of plebiscitary democracy gives the people bionic vision while rendering them mute. This is, I think, because of some tensions in how Green characterizes political agency in plebiscitary democracy. As I shall argue, although Green's argument is, as he suggests, indebted to Schumpeter, the concept of the People—capitalized throughout—is resoundingly not Schumpeterian. An uncharitable reading of the book is that Green takes on the least attractive features of Schumpeterian democracy—its elitism—while abandoning the most attractive element, the rejection of the so-called classical doctrine. Though this reading is unfair, I would like to suggest that there might be good reasons to reframe the ocular model to avoid some of the vulnerabilities of the vocal model.

First, Green characterizes the public gaze in a Foucaultian sense as an "ocular force whose chief function is to *train and form* individuals rather than to make decisions or levy taxes or lead armies" (Green, 154, emphasis in

original). Citing Foucault directly, he suggests that it "coerces by means of observation" (Green, 154; citing Foucault 1977, 170). But how precisely does Green intend the gaze to operate? I take it that the aim is to oblige candidates for office to appear in unscripted, spontaneous circumstances with each other—circumstances they do not control and in which they are forced to be "candid," in Green's technical sense of the term. Yet the only reason why a candidate should be concerned about surveillance is because she will be sanctioned on the basis of the information revealed therein—that is, she will win or lose political office because citizens will vote on the basis of what they see. To be sure, the fact that citizens vote in the final instance does not mean that the People engage in self-legislation. Green is right that the vocal model cannot adequately capture contemporary political life. But it does mean that the ultimate means by which legislators are "disciplined" is not the gaze itself but the ballot. The ocular model, then, is an important corrective to the vocal model, but it cannot entirely supplant it, as Green sometimes suggests that it should. In the final instance, voting is the means by which candidates are chosen and rejected; it is indispensable.

How does this analysis differ from minimalist or Schumpeterian models of democracy? On Green's account, Schumpeter provided a reasonable critique of democracy—the "electoral process is an insufficient organ for expressing views to the extent citizens do have them" (Green, 175)—but with the wrong implications. Schumpeter famously asserted that the "democratic method is that institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of the competitive struggle for the people's vote."[1] I take Green to hold that competition might well be an attractive foundation for democracy if it were understood that leaders must be subjected to the risk, uncertainty, and unpredictability of having to face challenge and contest. Elections are circumstances, in Green's words, that "impose uncertainty and destabilization upon leaders rather than securing their legitimation" (Green, 177). Adam Przeworski's Schumpeterian vision is similar; for democracy to endure, the outcome of elections must be sufficiently unpredictable that parties or other major political forces sometimes lose, but remain willing to obey the outcome because they believe that they stand a reasonable chance of winning in the future—there will be alternation in government.[2] In this sense, Green's conception of democracy is largely compatible with Schumpeter's. Neither Green nor Schumpeter (or Przeworski) wants to defend a version of democracy that aims to realize a popular will, and both emphasize competition for the vote—the unpredictable struggle to capture the public's attention and ultimately their ballots.

On Green's account, the plebiscitary model entails locating the object of popular power in the leader, emphasizing the gaze rather than judgment or

decision, and enacting popular control over the means of publicity. Green's loose discussion of "popular control" is in this sense relatively unproblematic—one might think that it is simply "majority control" over the selection of leaders or of ensuring that leaders must appear in public without having the opportunity to give prepared speeches, as enforced by public threats of ridicule or loss of office. But there is a critical, and in my view worrisome, difference between Green's conception and the Schumpeterian model. Green cares about a People—indeed, the word is capitalized throughout. The aim is to capture a *collective concept of the People* from an "ocular" rather than "vocal" perspective. He defines them as the "mass of everyday, non-office-holding citizens in their *collective* capacity" (Green, 4). He develops the concept more fully, holding that "Under the plebiscitary model, the People designates a political entity that might be termed the *organization of the unorganized*: political spectators linked together in their shared experience of nondecision, nonpreference, and relative subordination to political elites" (Green, 63). Further, in his words, "[T]he plebiscitarian conceives of popular sovereignty as *the rule of a principle*: specifically the principle of candor. . . . A plebiscitarian claims that in the context of any political event the People is sovereign— that is, the People will have its collective interest realized—to the extent that candor governs the public presentation at hand" (Green, 207–8).

It is not clear, however, why Green wants to retrieve or to revive this language of popular sovereignty, or what it lends to his argument. There is surely a sense in which Green is quite right that people on his model have a strong and even foundational interest in candor. However, the Habermasian move— to ascribe sovereignty to a procedure that ought to govern democratic decision making, that is, that constitutes legitimate democratic rule—is not quite made here in the development of the principle of candor as such. Moreover, even if it were, the claim that the People's interest in candor constitutes a basis for popular rule seems to undermine the central thesis that he wants to develop: that the people simply do *not* rule and the principle of candor cannot substitute for genuine political authority. In other words, Green should not wish to argue that the people ought to locate themselves in any meaningful way in public actions by elites—that would undermine their capacity to exert critical scrutiny.

Further, what is the work that collective agency more generally—the People—accomplishes here? What would be lost if this were the "eyes of the people"—the eyes of the aggregate or multitude of citizens? One might think, in fact, that the multiplicity of views, the distinctive perspectives of each spectator, would be the critical feature of an ethic of candor. After all, the candidates would then need to accommodate an additional level of unpredictability: the people they face are heterogeneous, with responses that may conflict. Green suggests that the fact that all citizens "see" constitutes them as a People.

In my view, a core critique of a version of the vocal model—one of the most important contributions of the Schumpeterian account and of social choice theory—is that it demonstrates that the people qua unitary actor with singular will is purely fictive. Thus why Green would want to take onto his brilliantly insightful reading of spectatorship this unitary model eludes me.

As such, I understand the contribution of *The Eyes of the People* to be slightly different than Green does. I take it to be a pivotally important account of the way in which spectatorship can serve as the primary model of democratic agency, which generates an ethics of candor as the accompanying critical ideal—but one that ought to improve the capacity of *individual citizens* to *choose* among candidates on the basis of their public behavior.

Neither Blind, nor Mute: Why the People Shouldn't Give Up on the Voice

Hélène Landemore, Yale University

Jeffrey Green's theory of "plebiscitary democracy" uniquely captures citizens' experience of representative democracy in the modern age as a chronic lack of voice and genuine sense of self-rule. It is not clear, however, that this experience should be celebrated as normatively appealing, even when sublimated as an empowered "gaze" or as the corresponding political ideal, in leaders, of "candor" (i.e., the requirement that leaders not be in control of the conditions of their public appearances). In other words, the descriptive and critical-diagnostic ambition of Green's plebiscitary democracy may well trump its value as the normative ideal it also aspires to be. In the following, after elaborating on this main thesis, I offer some additional comments on where I think the book oversells its undeniable achievement.[3]

Let me start by my external critique. Green is very much correct in pointing out that past and contemporary democratic theorists' exclusive focus on the "voice" of citizens—that is, citizens' ability to actively shape and even directly make collective decisions—masks the reality of today's mostly passive, apathetic, and powerless citizenship. In the age of mass and thus necessarily representative democracy, it is no longer true that democracy is an experiment in self-rule. It is, instead, an experiment in spectatorship. To the extent that it is descriptively accurate, Green's diagnosis is also a legitimate critique of much of contemporary democratic theory as anachronistic, when it looks back to Athens, or too utopian, when it looks for example to participation and deliberation on a mass scale.

Yet it is problematic to rationalize, if not romanticize altogether, the passive stance of contemporary citizens as the nobler activity of "watching."

Similarly, it seems to me problematic to suggest that citizens' contemporary lack of autonomy can be dignified as a form of democratic control, so long as they are given the opportunity of witnessing politicians' occasional slip-ups on TV. While this is probably not Green's intention, his rejection of the vocal model of democracy and his defense, instead, of a new ocular model risks coming across as political theory in a "sour grapes" mode. Since we can't have a voice, let us pretend it is not all that relevant or useful to begin with, and celebrate what we have instead, such as tickets to presidential inaugurations where we can watch and gaze upon officials put in a position of "candor" (as per the striking book cover, which features an anonymous crowd facing away from the viewer towards the looming figure of Obama on large video screens). If many participatory and deliberative democratic theorists are guilty of excessive utopianism, Green's own sin might be an unusual mix of pessimism—we can't hope to go much beyond representative institutions as we know them—and naivety—we should trust that these same institutions can ensure sufficient sincerity and spontaneity in our representatives.

To be fair, Green preempts some of these criticisms by embracing them as so many badges of honor. Thus, he bravely reclaims pessimism and realism as the landmark features of what he calls a new "Machiavellianism for the people." As Green puts it, "I admit that these charges are true: that a politics of candor is in fact imbued with a spirit of pessimism—or, as it is often called, a spirit of *realism* and, in particular, a willingness to lower political purposes out of respect for obstacles and difficulties that are deemed unnavigable" (p. 24). It is not the least admirable aspect of Green's book that it does not shy away from unpopular positions and is willing to bite a number of bullets for the sake of consistency, resulting in a political theory that is profoundly original and even, one is tempted to add, unfashionable or untimely in the Nietzschean sense (this is meant as high praise).

Green also puts forward various reforms of representative institutions meant to increase leaders' candor. These reforms apply in areas that classical participatory and deliberative democrats find of rather peripheral interest, such as presidential debates (which Green would turn into cross-examination by candidates themselves in front of a mute audience), public inquiries (which Green wants to routinize and divest of liability), and press conferences (which should put the president himself on the spot, not his press secretary, a function that Green wants to abolish entirely as one too many screens between the leader and the people). The goal of these reforms, limited and admittedly more feasible than many deliberative and participatory schemes, is to make sure that while citizens' lack of voice within representative institutions as we know them remains unchanged, the power of their gaze is increased. Green's political theory is thus pessimistic/realistic but not fatalist.

Not much can be done to empower citizens' voice but there are some options when it comes to their ocular control.

Yet, even if one grants that the strength of the book is in its realism, I would still argue that Green is not taking seriously enough new experiments in deliberative and participatory democracy that have outgrown the utopian stage and have increased the theoryies' credibility. Green's silence on that front may be due to his implicit focus on the U.S. context, where it is hard to disagree that representative institutions have grown stale and too little institutional imagination is at play, at least at the federal level (notwithstanding notable efforts by the Obama administration mentioned below). But in this globalized age, if the goal is to offer a normative theory of democracy as a universal value, we simply have to look beyond the U.S. case. A quick overview of the most prominent international examples of "democratic innovations"[4] gives hope about the possibility of hearing what the people have to say. James Fishkin's Deliberative Polls, conducted across the globe, both at the local and national level, have arguably successfully captured the voice of the people, by giving hundreds of randomly selected citizens the ability to truly deliberate about policy issues that matter to them.[5] British Columbia's Citizens' Assembly similarly illustrates how hundreds of quasi-randomly selected participants can be empowered to come up with reform proposals on complex issues (such as electoral reform) and initiate political changes bypassing regular elites.[6] On a smaller scale, one could also cite the established practice of Citizens' Juries, Consensus Conferences, or Citizens' Panels, which all involve regular and usually randomly selected citizens.

It might be objected that in mass democracies such as the United States, the odds of being selected for such empowering experiments are slim, as these "mini-publics" involve at best a few hundred participants at a time. But consider Participatory Budgeting, which directly involves thousands of self-selected citizens in budgetary decisions at the local and national level.[7] Since its first implementation in Porto Allegre in 1989, this form of direct democracy has become a normalized practice in Brazil, where it has been developed over the last twenty years, and is now implemented in many countries and cities in the world (including Chicago and, as of Spring 2012, several New York boroughs[8]). This form of direct participation is not without its problems (one being representativeness) but, where offered, genuinely allows any willing citizen to go beyond spectatorship.

Further, both the mini-publics and the larger-scale deliberative and participatory experiments can be sequenced and articulated in different ways,[9] which allows for the public to speak in multiple voices and for democracy as a whole to be more genuinely responsive to the public's preferences. This of course requires moving past the classical concept of democracy as representative government that Green seems to favor, or at least takes for granted, and

toward a new ideal of democracy as a "deliberative system,"[10] where deliberation is not just taking place in the official place and time determined by official representative institutions (e.g., Parliamentary assemblies and committees) but distributed across many deliberative sequences and institutions.[11]

Green's book also does not seem to measure fully the impact of the greatest technology break since print, namely the internet. Whereas TV and the radio, the technologies shaping Green's epistemological assumptions, allow only unidirectional communication flows, the internet enables two-way exchanges, vertically between leaders and their base, and horizontally between citizens themselves, who no longer need to be united solely in a silent gaze over their leaders but can commune in the interactive experience of deliberative exchanges and the possibility of collective action and decision making of a new kind. At the local level, for example, small but significant forms of empowerment are now possible with websites like seeclickfix.com, which allow anyone to register a problem observed in a given neighborhood—whether a broken lamp post, an overflowing trash bin, or drug dealing on a street corner—and notify relevant authorities, petition for their intervention, and even make suggestions about how to fix the problem.

At the national level, initiatives like the Open Government project launched by the Obama administration, including for example the program called Peer-to-Patent, enabled self-selected citizens to volunteer their knowledge to increase the efficiency of governmental agencies (e.g., the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office).[12] In Iceland, new technologies and social media allowed the public to be a part of an attempt at rewriting the national constitution through a "crowdsourcing" moment. They were able to use Twitter, Facebook, email, and a special webpage created for the occasion to post remarks, comments, and suggestions on the constitutional drafts regularly posted online by the Constitutional Council.[13]

Finally, at the international level, the internet has allowed for effective collective action, through websites such as Change.org, which allows citizens from any country to petition governments on issues of local or global interest, or a knowledge-sharing website like *Participedia*,[14] which serves as a repository of knowledge about participatory experiments and an online collaborative platform for activists from all venues, outside and above traditional representative institutions.

Today's technologies, I would thus argue, allow both for a stronger gaze and a louder voice, so that the choice need not be between either Green's solution or deliberative and participatory democrats'. For example, the omnipresence of cell phone cameras, combined with the existence of YouTube as a universal video platform, puts officials under a constant microscope,

enforcing on them the norm of candor usefully theorized by Green. But these new technologies also make it possible for more classical forms of vocal empowerment to be reconquered and new ones to be invented. Contrary to what Green often seems to suggest, one should thus be able to embrace the norm of candor without having to reject that of autonomy as self-rule.

I would also suggest that the important distinction between participation and political involvement recovered by Green can be used to support a more active model of citizenship. Whereas political participation refers to active political engagement (voting, giving money to candidates, campaigning, writing petitions, running for office, serving in government), political involvement simply refers to an awareness of political issues and problems and a general interest in them. Green points out that low participation is compatible with a high level of political involvement, a subtle point that Green's ocular model makes much more of than existing political theory. Political involvement in the age of the internet, however, can be tapped in ways it could not be in the age of the TV and radio and turned into, if not participation in the old sense, collaborative problem solving and decision making of a new kind. Even classical political activities—sit-ins, demonstrations, organizations of collectives, and so forth—can arguably benefit from the availability of civic energies liberated by new technologies. In the end, even if Green is right that deliberative and participatory democracy on a mass scale still remains hard to envision, my point is that in this day and age the public does not have to, and indeed should absolutely not, content itself with spectatorship alone.

Let me end on a more internal critique, if only to give the author an opportunity to clarify an important ambiguity. It remains unclear to me whether the ocular model of democracy is meant to replace the vocal one entirely and if not, in what relationship to the vocal model it is then supposed to stand, given the various displacements required by it (in terms of conceptualization of the locus and expression of popular sovereignty in particular). As a replacement for the vocal model, the ocular model is inadequate for an essential reason, which is that the gaze, no matter how empowered, is still dependent on the voice. This concession is made early in the book when Green admits that "the gaze is best understood as the reflection of a power that has its base in some nonocular terrain . . . (such as elections)" (p. 11). In other words, the gaze has power only to the extent that it is accompanied, and indeed preceded, by some form of actual physical or vocal control—the existence of periodic elections, the rule of law, the coercion of the state, and so forth. Despite this initial concession, though, the rest of the book proceeds as if it did not matter and the gaze was sufficient to found a new conception of popular sovereignty. This, of course, is implausible. Consider Tunisia and Egypt—countries

where, prior to the revolutions, there were none of the institutions of a real, functioning "vocal" democracy. No amount of gaze would have been sufficient, there, to tame the leaders. In the end, it took the actual physical gathering of people in public squares, the growling and furious sounds of the crowd, their voice and not just their gaze, to push tyrants away and regain some control. If it is the case that the gaze ultimately remains dependent on the voice, then I wonder if some of Green's concepts and reform proposals could not be helpfully enrolled to reenergize the vocal model of democracy from within, rather than question and unsettle it from without, to give back to the people both their voice *and* their sight.

Watching the Burkean Trustee and Internet Politics through the Lens of Jeffrey Green's *The Eyes of the People*

Eileen Hunt Botting, University of Notre Dame

In 1774, the Member of the British House of Commons, Edmund Burke, gave a speech to his electors at Bristol, in which he defended his famous conception of the representative as a trustee of the people, not a delegate or mouthpiece for their will, preferences, or interests. He concluded his speech with a deliberately ironic bit of flattery to his electors, claiming: "Your faithful friend, your devoted servant, I shall be to the end of my life: a flatterer you do not wish for."[15] In this concept of the representative as a "friend," not a "flatterer," of the people, and as an expert judge of the people's interests, not a virtual or presumed mouthpiece for the people's voice, Burke to some degree anticipated the philosophical and political debates that preoccupy Jeffrey Green in his excellent new addition to contemporary scholarship on theories of popular representation and plebiscitary democracy.

Just as Burke argued that he, as a Member of Parliament, was not bound to try to "flatter" the people by attempting to replicate, channel, or otherwise reproduce their preferences in his work as their representative, Green argues that representative democracy should not be understood as a "telephone line" between electors and the elected, by which the "vaporous" voice of the people is mysteriously carried through to their elected legislators and executives (Green, 115). Rather, Green argues that representative democracy is better understood according to a fresh political metaphor: the eyes of the people. He contends that we should think of democracy in ocular terms—as a process by which we, the people, serve as spectators of our representatives, keeping them accountable by making them feel watched. Similarly to Green and other plebiscitary theorists of democracy, Burke's trustee model began with the

premise of the impossibility of realizing the popular voice or will through the representative legislative process.

With a profound irony that only a colonized Irishman in the British Parliament could exhibit, Burke's 1774 speech to his electors in Bristol suggested that any attempt to serve as their mouthpiece would be nothing but flattery, since it was not possible to capture and transmit their preferences as a cohesive whole. Yet he could rationally discern—in concert with other expert and moral parliamentarians—what was best for his nation and the people of his district, then legitimately act on it: "Parliament is a deliberative assembly of one nation, with one interest, that of the whole; where, not local purposes, not local prejudices ought to guide, but the general good resulting from the general reason of the whole."[16] He flattered them, nonetheless, in asking them permission to be their trustee—even after they had elected him.

This political performance on the part of Burke—the ironic spectacle of asking his people permission to let him do what he thought right for the nation as their legislative representative, because of their inability to relay the common good to him and his inability to aggregate their diverse preferences into a conception of the rational good of the whole—illustrates some of the fascinating moral and political problems that Green's book addresses. If representative democracy is not about representing the voice of the people, then what is the function of representatives and the represented in democracy? Under the Burkean view, and, as I read it, in Green's view, the function of representatives is to act and perform in a spectacle of democratic politics. The function of the people is to serve as spectators, whose peering and seemingly omniscient eyes quietly threaten and disrupt the actors, making them ad-lib on the political stage. Indeed, the eyes of the electors seemed to occasion Burke's candor, as well as his ultimate sense of accountability to Bristol. His ironic yet cocky candor with his electors in 1774 led him to react to their displeasure with his trustee model of representation by refraining from running for MP of their city in 1780.[17] Even then, his speech in declining the nomination reinforced his self-representation as a trustee not needing to fully survey the will of the people: "I have not canvassed the whole of this city in form. But I have taken such a view of it as satisfies my own mind that your choice will not ultimately fall upon me."[18]

Burke's 1774 speech to his electors at Bristol had projected his legitimacy as a trustee: "You choose a member indeed; but when you have chosen him he is not a member of Bristol, but he is a member of parliament."[19] Yet he was also aware of the precarious character of this legitimacy and the authority it gave him. Burke's sense of double-consciousness—as a colonized Irishman and an assimilated British politician—made him all too aware of how this power could be wrested from him at any moment.[20] This insecurity may have

driven his lofty rhetorical appeals to divine providence as a justification of his trusteeship. He portrayed his "mature judgment" and "enlightened conscience" as "a trust from Providence, for the abuse of which he is deeply answerable."[21] The election of 1780, when Burke felt compelled to withdraw his candidacy for the Bristol seat in favor of Malton, indicates the fragility of these appeals to his divinely sanctioned authority and elite political wisdom. Burke's long-term failure to convincingly perform as a trustee for the people of Bristol begs us to ask: what do his political mistakes teach us about the enduring applicability of the concept of democracy as an ironic spectacle?

In the context of the modern media, where we, the people, tend to receive our political information through viewing of carefully staged and scripted news programs on television or YouTube videos shared in our online social networks, perhaps ocular democracy is better conceived as a kind of *watching* rather than a kind of *spectatorship*. In Shakespeare's Globe theatre, where the audience was famously interactive with the actors, or even in Burke's meeting hall in Bristol, where the candidate felt compelled to flatter the electors despite his pretense to the opposite, the relationship between spectator and spectated was dialectical: each was responsive to the actions, or expected actions, of the other. In modern media, especially since the internet has come to dominate it, we, the people, do not spectate in this interactive or dialectical sense so much as we watch in a more passive, distant, yet eerily all-knowing sense.

No longer does the elite Burkean trustee have the God's-eye view in democratic politics, but rather we, the people, have usurped the God's-eye view through the diffusion of our "eyes" via the modern media. Whereas the panopticon of Bentham's prison was directed toward the inward, all-seeing, all-knowing surveillance of the inmates within its walls, the panopticon of our time has inverted itself, turning outward, marshaling the power of the internet to empower us to watch our politicians, or at least make them always "feel like" someone is watching them. As Weber, Key, and Schumpeter theorized, we may not be able to convey our will via our representatives, but we can retrospectively judge their political performances, and periodically "vote the bums out" in the market economy of electoral competition (Green, 112–77).

This brings me to a friendly question for Green, which is, does it matter that we actually watch our politicians? Or is the threat of watching them enough to keep them on their metaphorical toes? In practical terms, the spread of internet-based media seems to have made us potential or hypothetical watchers, rather than actual watchers. We, the people, appear to be one step further removed from ideal models of robust democratic participation.

Recent internet trends such as the controversial yet incredibly popular short film *Kony 2012* illustrate how the modern media can encourage a kind

of passive watching and simplistic reception of complex political problems. *Kony 2012* was produced by the organization Invisible Children, which seeks to raise awareness and visibility of the problem of the Lord's Resistance Army's forcible impressment of children as soldiers in its past two decades of armed conflict in eastern and central Africa.[22] Although the film is fairly sophisticated in its deliberate manipulation of ideas and images of internet social networking, popular awareness, and political theatricality to raise consciousness of these crimes against children, the thirty-minute internet video has been trenchantly critiqued by non-Western and Western commentators alike for failing to communicate the complexity of the political issues on the ground in eastern and central Africa.[23] As the Ethiopian-American novelist Dinaw Mengestu recently wrote,

> In the world of Kony 2012, Joseph Kony has evaded arrest for one dominant reason: Those of us living in the western world haven't known about him, and because we haven't known about him, no one has been able to stop him. The film is more than just an explanation of the problem; it's the answer as well. It's a beautiful equation that can only work so long as we believe that nothing in the world happens unless we know about it, and that once we do know about it, however poorly informed and ignorant we may be, every action we take is good, and more importantly, "makes a difference."[24]

Mengestu's commentary on *Kony 2012* raises important questions for media-savvy democratic theorists. In the spirit of Robert Dahl's questioning of *who governs*, we ought to ask: *Who* is watching? *To whom* have the oppressed been invisible, and *why*?[25] Does the internet make their plight more visible, or more opaque, to the people who "watch" them or their political leaders? In light of these questions, the new democratic culture of "watching" politics could be less a vehicle for a cosmopolitan ethic of care, and more for an Orwellian dystopia in which our cultural biases are reinforced by the scripts of the media. Perhaps the panopticon has inverted itself again, turning us into the Foucaultian inhabitants of Plato's cave (Green, 246n44). We may be watching shadows on the walls of our laptop screens, with the pleasing illusion of control that only a click of a mouse can give.

Tying these problems together, I wonder if the political mistakes of Burke might provide insight into how to escape this current democratic predicament of ocular passivity. Burke's decision to publicly adopt the trustee model of representation was politically unwise. His ironic posture provides no protection, or sympathetic regard, from the eyes of the people. They "see through" his placating intentions and ultimately judge him as an inattentive, self-serving, and lame duck representative of the Bristol district.

The relationship of *Kony 2012* to its internet audience poses a set of comparable political problems on a dramatically different stage. The opening scenes of *Kony 2012* display an ironic self-awareness of the ways that internet media pervades our lives, relationships, and identities. We are shown the abstract revolving globe of the earth, from the apparently God's-eye perspective of outer space, and asked to reflect on how social media nonetheless ties us together across the continents. The film proceeds to argue, through the filmmaker's interviews with his very young son and a former LRA child-soldier, that "watching" *Kony 2012* is in itself the obvious starting point for solving the problem of social justice faced by the "invisible children" of eastern and central Africa. The interviews are often poignant, but are also explicitly sentimental and even emotionally exploitative of the audience's sense of obligation toward these children and future generations of children. The film adopts a deliberately ironic posture toward its own emotive appeals to global social networking and the moral insights of children. Ultimately, the film is saying: you are being visually manipulated into caring about these children, whom you would have already known were victims of a decades-long war if you were half as smart as the average child.

The additional, and most damaging, irony has not been lost on many a viewer: the film neither succeeds in adopting an intercultural perspective on social justice nor in pushing forward an authentic sense of connection between peoples across the global North and South. In April 2012, a riot at a screening of the film in Gulu—which left one person dead and many injured—sadly captures the dangerous social consequences of the ironies of *Kony 2012*. The rioters were angry at the film's lack of concern for the perspectives of northern Ugandan people, especially those who had been conscripted to fight for the LRA.[26]

There are three main political lessons that theorists of ocular democracy may draw from audience responses to Burke in Bristol and to *Kony 2012* around the world. First, plebiscitarians are better off resisting the urge to acknowledge the ironies of their advocacy and practice of representative democracy, especially when playing a leadership role. Second, democratic audiences might take advantage of the critical opportunities presented by such blunders (or miscalculated candor) in their leaders' performances, as Green argues. Third, an actively watching people might be developed over time by encouraging youth around the globe to use civics education, intercultural dialogue, and social media (especially independent and inexpensive web-based videos or podcasts) to shape critical public opinion and engagement on questions of social justice at the national, international, and perhaps even authentically transnational levels.

Lots'a Gotcha Moments for the Deciders: Jeffrey Green's *Eyes of the People*

Ruth Abbey, University of Notre Dame

My questions about *The Eyes of the People: Democracy in an Age of Spectatorship* are posed in the spirit of support and admiration for Jeffrey Green's accomplishment. This is as an excellent work of political theory: intelligent, thoughtful, and thorough, while also being original. It is realistic and grounded, clearly written and argued, and exhibits intellectual maturity by being honest about the limitations and lacunae of the thinkers and approaches Green admires.

As intimated in my praise for the book as realistic and grounded, I read Green as advancing a non-ideal approach to the question of popular sovereignty. Importing terminology from the work of John Rawls seems like an apposite way of characterizing Green's approach. A non-ideal theory faces squarely issues of inequality, injustice, and oppression in the political relations of societies that espouse the goods of equality, respect, fairness, and freedom for all. This non-ideal approach is manifested in Green's insistence that the modern conditions of mass democracy threaten the idea of equality and self-rule in contemporary democratic societies: "Exclusion and the spectatorship it engenders are fundamental to the contemporary experience of democracy" (Green, 68, cf. 29–30, 47). He further insists that democratic theory has a duty to take this condition seriously and not remain in the clouds of ideal theory by simply articulating ideals and models that can never be realized. "Political philosophy of a democratic stamp has a special obligation to develop political principles in a manner that respects the everyday structure of political experience" (Green, 6, cf. 3–4, 16, 36–37, 47, 202).[27]

While facing these problems squarely, Green tries to navigate a middle course between the Scylla of unattainable ideals and the Charybdis of disappointment and despair (7).[28] He does this by advancing his principle of candor, which will make the spectatorship to which most citizens are confined more powerful. Pellucid without being pessimistic, Green's outlook inspires his selective reclamation of the plebiscitarian tradition of democratic thinking and his formation of a spectatorial model of democracy (Green, 32, 129, 159).

How the Two Models of Democracy Relate

My first question comes from the suspicion that Green sometimes exaggerates the distance and the difference between the two models of democracy he delineates. I see them as more complementary and perhaps even symbiotic

than he seems to permit. The vocal model of democracy, which focuses on voting in elections, seems to be what gets the spectatorial model in general, and the principle of candor in particular, going. After all, leaders care about being seen by those who might vote for them. They have no interest in how they are seen by non-citizens, nor even really by the large swathe of Americans who never vote.[29]

So the vocal model, with its emphasis on elections, seems to be prior and preconditional to the spectatorial model, even if the spectatorial model accurately captures the way most nonleaders participate in democratic politics most of the time. I think of the two models by analogy with a clock face: we start at midnight (or noon) with the vocal model, which explains why elections matter. One hand then moves slowly down and around to the number 6, and during its passage from 12 to 6, we have the spectatorial model, which is the condition of most citizens, most of the time (Green, 4–5, 32). But at 6:30 the vocal model reappears, because the telos of spectatorship is the election, or some other means by which people pass judgment on leaders—such as a referendum or recall vote. Between 6:30 and midnight (or noon) we are back to the spectatorial model, and so on, in a revolving cycle.

Green does occasionally acknowledge this sort of interaction between the two models, conceding that "the ocular model is not absolutely hostile to the vocal model in every case . . . it may be . . . that ocular power is underwritten by the vocal one: that without elections, leaders would have little obligation to make public appearances, let alone candid ones" (Green, 15, cf. 12–13). But despite the occasional nod to their connection, the overall thrust of his presentation is to distinguish the two models. Consider, for example, his assertion that "a plebiscitary politics grounded on the ocular ideal of candor . . . suggest[s] an alternative moral universe . . . " (Green, 19, cf. 119, 188, 210).[30]

At times, Green presents the spectatorial model as silent watching, even though the watchers are also listeners and interpreters. He acknowledges that the watchers are also listeners in a note appended to the first chapter (Green, 213n2) and in his claim that "*sight* and *hearing*, the passive organs of sense . . . typify the modern experience of being-ruled" (Green, 40, emphasis in original), but the fact that audiences are listening as well as watching needs more acknowledgment than this. The audience is also interpreting what they see and hear, which leads me to a concern that what Green's differentiation of the vocal from the ocular model occludes is that both are verbal. Not only do voters "speak" during elections, even if they are listeners for most of the time between them, but even when spectating, voters are actively making sense of the words and deeds of leaders, and this they do through language. Pace his reference above to the passive organs of sense, spectators and auditors are not as passive as Green makes them out to be when referring to "the passive,

nonparticipatory, *spectatorial* nature of everyday political life" (Green, 17, emphasis in original), and "the all-too-common *passive* experience of being silent and deferring to the decision making of a select cadre of political elites" (Green, 28, emphasis in original). He later refers to "the nonsovereign majority, silent and passive, for whom political experience primarily consists of spectatorship" (Green, 58) and says that "the everyday experience of politics is the passive spectatorship of the select few who are engaged in public decision making" (Green, 61). Instead of being passive viewers and listeners, people are actively interpreting the information they see and hear.

To the adverb *actively* I would add *variously*. Attention to the fact that viewers are not just interpreting what they see and hear as and after they see it, but will do this differently from one another, corrodes some of the unity Green imputes to the viewing audience in a democracy. Different viewers and hearers will come away from performances of leaders with very different "take aways" from what they just saw and heard, and these diverging impressions will influence their next opportunity to voice their interpretations in an election. Once again, Green acknowledges this to some extent (Green, 210), but does not drive home its full implications. This point about diverse interpretations of the same event has repercussions for the principle of candor, because it signals that not all viewers are going to interpret the same happening, admission, or reaction as candid. Some will see it as a gotcha moment, while others will interpret the leader's statement or reactions more sympathetically, depending in large part of course on their existing political orientation and predilections.

As this indicates, partisanship and the associated cognitive biases that most people bring to their interpretations of political events dilute the critical impact of the principle of candor. Perhaps this principle is most apposite for that sector of the electorate that identifies itself as independent and which might genuinely be swayed by a politician's moment of candor. Perhaps it is also relevant when we can control to some extent for partisanship—in a primary contest for example—and the viewers might plump for Romney over Santorum or Clinton over Obama because of a moment of candor on the part of one or the other. But my general point here is that the witnessing of candor is unlikely to be a uniform experience: candor will be interpreted differently by different parts of the electorate. And note again how easily the discussion lapses into a concern with elections, suggesting again that the two models are not quite as separable as Green often suggests.

Between Governor and Outsider

There is another way in which Green tends to overstate the unity of the spectating audience. However his two models of popular sovereignty—the

dominant vocal one and the ocular—interact, these two models coexist in the book with what is actually a tri-partite distinction within the people. The first component of Green's depiction of the democratic citizenry comprises the leaders, deciders, or governors, who hold power temporarily but who emerge from, and will be reabsorbed into, the electorate (Green, 32). The second is "an intermediate position of citizenship in which there is meaningful psychological involvement with politics, but which nevertheless does not lead to active participation in political life" (Green, 33, cf. 35, 48, 53). The third stratum consists of the apolitical citizen who "takes little interest in public affairs, lacks knowledge about government, has no sense of being an efficacious actor, and either does not vote or votes without a clear sense of what is being selected" (Green, 33). These latter two strata occupy the space "between governor and outsider" and comprise the category of "citizen-being-ruled" (Green, 35).

Green's political ethic is, therefore, binary but his population has three constituencies. With two models of popular sovereignty, and three distinct subgroups within the people, there is a slippage internal to Green's theory. As far as I can tell, the spectatorial model only applies to the intermediate group. The third group of apolitical citizens are not even spectators: they come to politics with eyes wide shut. To use another of Green's metaphors, this group never visits the political zoo (Green, 33). The statistics on pages 49–50 suggest that 5–10 percent of the population actively participate; 60–70 percent are at least minimally involved—the viewers as Green would portray them. But that leaves between 20 and 35 percent of the population as not involved at all. Yet Green's theory has nothing to say to or about this group. They are largely invisible in his spectatorial model. They too are citizens-being-ruled but they do not watch the rulers and so cannot, presumably, be empowered by the increase in candor.

Yet the incompleteness of Green's conception of the people is eclipsed by his claim that the spectators are synonymous with the people:

> a key effect of a plebiscitary account of democracy is to provide the citizen-being-ruled with a larger group to which he or she can belong; namely, *the People*—defined as the mass of everyday citizens understood in their collective capacity . . . the People designates a political entity that might be termed *the organization of the unorganized*: political spectators linked together in their shared experience of nondecision, nonpreference, and relative subordination to political elites. (Green, 62–63, emphasis in original, cf. 6)

Having nothing to say to or about this third group of apolitical citizens makes Green's ocular model a more partial, in the sense of incomplete, account of popular sovereignty than he ever acknowledges. The people are all

citizens-being-ruled but are not, by Green's own admission, all spectators. The category of "the people" is broader than that of spectators. Spectatorship cannot, therefore, provide the unifying thread of the people that Green repeatedly declares it can (Green, 28, 118, 178, 206). The third apolitical stratum constitutes a significant portion of the people and should, by his own logic, be of concern to democratic theorists.

The Paradox of the People

Green's incomplete account of the people leads me to conclude that he should separate the phenomenon of spectatorship from his attempt to redeem in a meaningful way the category of the people (Green, 27–28, 68, 206, 209, 68). Only some of the people are spectators, yet the category of "the people" should cover all citizens. We need either to find a more inclusive way of portraying the people's experience than spectatorship or admit that it is too hard to give a phenomenology of the category of the people. This latter option leads to the bigger question of whether nonideal democratic theory even needs a conception of the people. I think the answer is yes, persuaded by Charles Taylor's argument that in order to function and prosper, democracy needs to generate and sustain a strong sense of "we the people"; a robust sense of the collective democratic decision-making body. Participants need to believe themselves to be listened to, and heard, by their fellow citizens in order to consider their democracy legitimate.[31] But the category of "the people" is and probably must remain a paradox: on the one hand, it can never be realized, but on the other hand, it is indispensable to any critical and progressive democratic theory.[32]

Reply to Critics

Jeffrey Edward Green, University of Pennsylvania

I am grateful to the contributors for the generosity of their critical attention. Their comments provide an occasion for me not only to defend and clarify certain elements of *The Eyes of the People* (*EOP*) but also to learn how many of the ideas pursued in the book might be developed further in the future. I organize my response to their contributions around five issues: (1) the relationship of *EOP* to Burke and the trustee model of representation; (2) the relationship between the vocal and ocular models of popular empowerment; (3) the question of whether spectatorship is as collective a phenomenon as *EOP* alleges; (4) the question of whether *EOP* fails to account for the active, participatory potential of spectatorship and ordinary citizenship; (5) the question of whether the People is better jettisoned than reformulated in ocular terms.

1. Situating EOP vis-à-vis Burke and the Trustee Model of Representation

Eileen Hunt Botting appeals to Burke's 1774 speech to the electors at Bristol to illustrate the "moral and political problems" that *EOP* seeks to address. The relevance of Burke, Botting suggests, is twofold. On the one hand, Botting's trusteeship model of representation—in which parliamentarians are supposed to rely on their own deliberative reflection in determining public matters, rather than act as mere mouthpieces, or delegates, for their constituents' preexisting preferences—conceptualizes representation in a manner seemingly in harmony with *EOP*'s strong doubts about how well ordinary citizens in contemporary mass democracies have their collective preferences reflected in the legislative output of the state. On the other hand, Botting appeals to the choreography of Burke's speech—his actual appearance before an assembled group of onlookers in a manner that, because Burke did not fully control the event, carried with it a certain amount of political risk, uncertainty, and unpredictability—as an instance of candor as I define the term and, also, as a form of public appearance potentially threatened in our own era where leaders appear to us, not directly, but *mediated* through television and other technologies.

I share Botting's sense of the aptness of the Burke example to the claims and concerns of *EOP* and would add, only, that the example's usefulness stems as much from how it departs from the spirit of the book as precurses it. With regard to the first of the two points of linkage—representation—if Burke's trustee model is grounded, as Botting emphasizes, on the *impossibility* of a legislature being able "to capture and transmit [the electorate's] preferences as a cohesive whole," then Burke's defense of trusteeship does seem to follow upon a concern very similar to my own: the profound difficulty of even cognizing a genuine popular will for most issues. If, however, Burke's objection to delegation is not so much the absence of a popular will but its inferiority to the reasoned deliberation of elite parliamentarians (a reading which seems to follow from Burke's objection to leaders *flattering* the People), then I would understand Burke's theory as a version of the usual conceptualization of popular power as a vocal, expressive, legislative force waiting to be channeled into laws and policies. That Burke rejects the propriety of such channeling does not mean that he rejects the ontological conception of the People's power in terms of voice—and, if he does not reject this conception, then I depart from Burke precisely in my critical account of this prevalent ontology. Further, if Burke finds in the trustee model a mode by which leaders might attain full legitimacy—because he thinks elected parliamentary leaders do tend to realize policies consonant with "the general

good"—this too departs from the argument of *EOP* which finds in the impossibility of fully realizing the delegate model of representation one key source for why leaders in contemporary mass democracy lack full legitimacy (another, related key source being that it never seems possible to say with complete confidence that elected representatives are in fact realizing the common good).

With respect to the second point of linkage, I agree that Burke's speech is an excellent concrete example of a leader's appearance on a public stage—and I also accept Botting's concerns that this interactive form of appearance (where audience members can interject in real time) risks having its critical potential neutralized by the rise of unidirectional, mediated political communication. Botting's distinction between the interactive spectatorship of the onlookers in 1774 and the *mere watching* of television viewers today underlines these worries. And, in somewhat different terms, Botting expresses a similar apprehension when she speculates about a twofold transformation: namely, that the *panoptical* model whereby the few can achieve surveillance over the many (as in Foucault's analysis of the modern prison) has ushered in not only promising *synoptical* possibilities whereby the many can survey the few (e.g., the new degree to which leaders are under heightened surveillance, in large part because as Hélène Landemore points out an increasing number of ordinary citizens carry cameras with them at all times and can easily share their recordings on a common site), but, with these, the real threat of citizens watching meaningless, or, worse, manipulative, spectacles of their leaders (what Botting nicely describes as an inverted panopticon in which citizens are turned into "Foucauldian inhabitants of Plato's cave"). If I depart from Botting here at all, and I am not sure that I do, it is not that I am without such concerns but that I think candor, the principle that leaders appear under conditions they do not control, has as vital a role to play in regulating mediated public appearances as in direct, interactive ones. While it is true that citizens in contemporary mass democracy watching politics on television (often long after the events being watched actually transpired) cannot interact with their leaders, if the content of what they watch is candid—such that leaders are precluded from orchestrating their messages in a controlled, uncontested fashion, but must appear under conditions of risk and uncertainty—then the Orwellian potential of our mediated politics, I think, will be reduced not augmented. What matters from the perspective of generating authentic as opposed to manipulated spectatorship, I believe, is not that the spectators themselves interact with leaders (especially given the highly limited, reactive expressivity that has always shaped such audience interjections), but that *someone* or *something* interact with leaders so that they do not completely-control the conditions of their publicity.

2. The Relationship of the Vocal and Ocular Models

Another concern raised by contributors involves the relationship between the two models of popular empowerment. Ruth Abbey questions whether I exaggerate the difference between the vocal and ocular models, since it would seem that the vocal model is "prior and preconditional to" the ocular model and that, relatedly, my analysis of the ocular model continually "lapses into a concern with [the necessarily vocal institution] of elections." Melissa Schwartzberg also expresses this worry when she writes of *EOP* that "the ultimate means by which legislators are 'disciplined' is not the gaze itself, but the ballot"—so that the ocular model "cannot entirely supplant [the vocal model] as Green sometimes suggests that it should." Likewise, Landemore takes issue with how parts of *EOP* proceed "as if it did not matter . . . that the gaze, no matter how empowered, is still dependent on the voice."

The relationship between the two models is complex, since while distinct they are not altogether opposed. Abbey, Schwartzberg, and Landemore recognize this complexity—they acknowledge that *EOP* does make the point that the two models need not conflict and can work in tandem—but they think my overall emphasis nonetheless is to distinguish the models as separate alternatives and that this move remains in some respects unpersuasive. In response to this point, I think it is helpful to differentiate the *origins* of popular power from the *field* in which popular empowerment manifests itself. *EOP* holds that while both models may ultimately share the same origins (insofar as the threat of losing elections motivates leaders, both to try to make decisions that will seem consonant with the people's alleged voice and to withstand critical publicity before the people's eyes), they are more likely to diverge in their conceptualization of how popular empowerment should be manifested.[33] Even with regard to this latter dimension there is a possibility for overlap, but if *EOP* emphasizes the potential for divergence, it is because the question of the field of popular empowerment makes a palpable difference in how reformist energies, always scarce, are to be expended. With regard to debates, for example, the vocal model might suggest that the key thing is to find ways to include representatives of the People's voice (e.g., audience questions), whereas the ocular model recognizes that it is precisely by eliminating such outside interventions that the candor of the debates would be maximized (i.e., without third parties, the candidates would have no choice but to engage in cross-examination with each other, the format that arguably carries with it the highest potential for risk and spontaneity). Likewise, an "ocular democrat," inspired by the ancient Athenian practice of *euthynai* (or public audits) would support having leaders, following their term in office, compelled to provide public testimony about their conduct

(perhaps with immunity)—a practice which might seem unhelpful (because retrospective, non-legislative, and disruptive) from the perspective of the vocal model, but deeply satisfying (because providing an institutional source of candor) when considered in ocular terms. More generally, it can be said that whereas the tendency of the vocal model is to focus on the *content* of political communication (what is said and done) in evaluating popular empowerment, the ocular perspective attends to the *form* of political communication (e.g., how candid it is)—and if it is true that these two perspectives need not conflict, I believe they are sufficiently different from each other in the reforms they suggest to support the rhetoric of "alternatives" upon which, as Abbey, Schwartzberg, and Landemore rightly note, I often rely.

3. Is Spectatorship As Collective an Experience As EOP Alleges?

Abbey also questions whether spectatorship can "provide the unifying thread of the people that Green repeatedly declares it can." She points out that while I initially acknowledge the "apolitical citizen"—who is neither an active governor nor a spectator—I go on to treat spectatorship as a phenomenon applying to the collective, non-elite citizenry. This is a great observation, but I believe its significance is less that it challenges the phenomenon of a widely shared spectatorship than it indicates how within certain polities—notably the United States—democratization has not led to a widely shared prosperity, but unfortunately has been consistent with a deeply underprivileged economic minority whose insufficient access to basic resources like health care, safety, and education exposes the inadequacy of merely formal democratic rights like universal suffrage. I take it as a legitimate objection to my book that it says nothing about this underprivileged group—and hardly anything about the broader issue of the impact of economic inequality on politics—and I hope that future work can do better in these regards. But with respect to the specific issue of spectatorship, I think that it is in fact defensible to appeal to spectatorship as something virtually all ordinary citizens, underprivileged or otherwise, share in their bearing toward politics. Milbrath's influential 1965 study on political participation, which estimated 30 percent of the population as being apolitical, reveals its datedness in precisely this respect: the proliferation of television and internet, along with preexisting print journalism, means that, perhaps more so than ever before, it is difficult to escape political spectatorship entirely.[34] *EOP* invokes the apolitical citizen more as a *figure* that recurs in democratic theory (a merely economic agent who, it is important to note, still votes and so is not completely outside of politics) than as a credible account of the bearing of ordinary citizens toward political life.

4. Does EOP Underestimate the Active, Participatory Potential of Spectatorship and Ordinary Citizenship?

As Landemore rightly observes, equally important as the *aspirational* ambition of *EOP* to delineate a progressive norm for democratic spectatorship (i.e., candor) is its *critical-diagnostic* ambition to demonstrate a pervasive tendency within democratic theory, both past and present, to overstate ordinary citizens' opportunities to actively shape the norms and conditions of public life. I take the claims that I have overlooked aspects of spectators' potential control over what they see—from Botting regarding the allegedly interactive forms of political spectatorship common prior to the rise of modern technologies and from Abbey regarding my inattention to the degree to which "people are actively interpreting the information they see and hear"— as arguments that, even if true in some specific sense, are objectionable if they suggest ordinary citizens possess a level of empowerment equal to that of leaders or, in any case, sufficiently approximate to what the historic ideal of free and equal citizenship requires so as to merit our complacency. This tendency to exaggerate the power of ordinary people—and thus to resist confrontation with the heteronomic core of actual political life as it is experienced by everyday citizens in its raw immediacy—is something that *EOP* tries to expose and criticize as a long-standing, still-enduring trope within the study of democracy, a trope which reveals how otherwise commendable democratic sensibilities (i.e., the commitment to free and equal citizenship) can promote unrealistic diagnoses about the present (e.g., the belief that the conditions of such citizenship are already being realized to a satisfactory degree).

Landemore challenges *EOP*'s pessimism regarding the structure of ordinary citizenship less by insisting upon a more participatory form of spectatorship than by holding on to the enduring relevance of the vocal model. On the one hand, Landemore draws attention to recent events—like the revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt in 2011—in which, according to her, the "voice and not just [the] gaze [of] . . . the actual physical gathering of people in public squares . . . push[ed] tyrants away and regain[ed] some control." On the other hand, she appeals to recent and future technologies that might "make it possible for more classical forms of vocal empowerment to be reconquered." In response, I should restate that I do not deny that certain individual citizens or well-organized groups might influence public policy. What I reject is the belief that the People (the collection of ordinary citizens taken as a whole) regularly performs this function or that such successful instances of representation are typical of ordinary (as opposed to exceptional) political experience. It strikes me that the Arab Spring is as much a caution about the applicability

of the vocal model as it is evidence for it, insofar as the protests involved the *exceedingly rare* instance of *liberation* (the binary delegitimation of regimes) rather than the *ordinary and ongoing* practice of *self-legislation* (the more subtle and expressive determination of concrete laws and policies). With regard to new and future technologies, I certainly do not want to discount the abstract possibility that these will drastically improve the participatory potential of democratic politics in mass democracy, but I believe it is a disservice to the reality of our situation to think that the examples Landemore cites are doing this. In fact, Landemore does not disagree as she herself acknowledges that in spite of the numerous developments she outlines (deliberative polling, citizen assemblies, participatory budgeting, the Open Government Initiative, seeclickfix.com, and Iceland's use of crowd-sourcing to rewrite its constitution), "deliberative and participatory democracy on a mass scale still remains hard to envision and . . . we are still far from anything as radical as the proponents of e-democracy hope." I believe our disagreement, if we have one, is less about excitement over the potential for future progress than about the importance of having any concrete, existing democracy attend to its fundamental shortcomings vis-à-vis historical ideals of equal participation and self-legislation.[35] If I strongly emphasize such shortcomings, it is not merely because of any mood of pessimism, but because of the new *normative* (as opposed to only technological) possibilities opened up by facing them—and candor (with its focus on regulating never-fully-legitimate leaders rather than laws) would be a key example of such pessimistically infused normative innovation.

5. Should the Collective, Macrosubject of the People Be Abandoned?

A key challenge emerging from the critics is to question why I continue to rely on the idea of popular sovereignty at all. This point is made especially forcefully by Schwartzberg, who argues that by trying to replace the idea of sovereignty on an ocular rather than vocal register—instead of jettisoning the notion—I, first, run the risk of contradicting my overall point in exposing heteronomic features of ordinary political life and, second, I employ a hard-to-verify, speculative macrosubject of the People (the mass of ordinary citizens in their *collective* capacity) about which one might be rightly skeptical. Why not, she suggests, follow the sobriety which seems to inform other aspects of my critique of democratic theory and simply dispense with the metaphysics of popular sovereignty? What, after all, would be lost, Schwartzberg asks, if I spoke only of the eyes of "the aggregate or multitude

of citizens" rather than invoke the People? In other words, rather than note the unreality of the People conceived as sovereign self-legislator and then go on to find another conception of popular sovereignty, why not simply abandon the notion of sovereignty altogether—and, in particular, the problematic notion of the People on which it rests?

While I appreciate the desire for accuracy and clear-headedness underlying such a criticism, one of the central premises of *EOP* is that the unreality of the People in a democratic society is a *problem* in need of solution. It is not just that the etymology of democracy would seem to require democratic citizens to have some lively notion of the *demos.* More concretely, the loss of a meaningful notion of democratic peoplehood is the loss of non-atomistic avenues of empowerment. This loss represents an unwelcome deflation of the meaning of democracy—since, historically, a central promise of democracy was that an ordinary citizen would be connected to a larger, collective entity—the People—and that, in addition to considering the individual's private interest, the People's interest would be formed and empowered. Rousseau captures this double aspect of democratic empowerment—its individual and collective components—when he hypothesizes a democratic citizen who after contributing his own preference in a political decision has to then confront the majority view as that of the People and, thus, as something to which his own preference ought to conform: "When, therefore, the opinion contrary to my own prevails, this proves only that I have made a mistake, and that what I believed the general will was not so."[36] Without a meaningful sense of democratic peoplehood, few think in such terms today. One need not accept Rousseau's democratic theory in its specifics—certainly not his account of the general will—to express some nostalgia and legitimate longing for a democratic society in which an everyday citizen had *two* chances for empowerment: one through the opportunity to voice one's preference as an individual, the other through finding satisfaction that the special collective to which one belonged by virtue of living in a democracy—the *demos*—would be made to rule. Because I think part of the promise of democracy is the double empowerment of the ordinary citizen—both as an individual and also as a member of the People—I think problems with the leading paradigm of popular sovereignty as a vocal process ought to lead to a revision, but not abandonment, of our understanding of the People: specifically, to the reformulation of popular sovereignty in ocular terms.

To a certain extent, Abbey shares Schwartzberg's concerns about my (or *any*) invocation of the People. She raises the possibility that we today might "admit that it is too hard to give a phenomenology of the category of the [P]eople," which leads her to ask "whether non-ideal democratic theory even needs a conception of the people." Abbey, however, ultimately resists the suggestion that the People be jettisoned, since she thinks that "in order to

function and prosper, democracy needs to generate a strong sense of 'we the people': a robust sense of the collective democratic *decision-making* body" (emphasis added). Yet she also argues that any recovered conception of the category of the People "probably must remain in paradox: on the one hand, it can never be realized, but on the other hand it is indispensable to any critical and progressive democratic theory." While I clearly share Abbey's concern for holding on to a notion of the People—and while I also share her view that any conception of the People as a collective decision maker will be caught up in paradox—I depart from her in being skeptical about the ultimate value and emancipatory potential of a paradoxical conception of peoplehood. As I see it, one of the central attributes of any vital and democratically useful notion of the People should be that it allows us to know whether and to what degree the power of the People is in fact being exercised. The problem with the paradoxical conception—a conception that has received a great deal of attention and support in recent years not just from Abbey, but from numerous other thinkers including Lefort, Rosanvallon, Honig, Frank, and in a sense Rancière—is that it is too easily circumvented in practice. If the people's empowerment is accepted as paradoxical, we risk not only normalizing situations when it is legitimate that the People not rule, but losing clarity about when it is and is not ruling—something that exposes popular empowerment in the direst fashion to manipulation and effective neutralization by politicians. And so, while I agree that customary conceptualizations of the People as a vocal, legislative being will lead to paradox—for me this is a chief reason to move beyond such traditional formulations and explore an alternate ontology of popular power.

Notes

1. Joseph Alois Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1942), 269.
2. Adam Przeworski, "Minimalist conception of democracy: A defense," in *Democracy's Value*, ed. Ian Shapiro and Casiano Hacker-Cordon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).
3. In this review, I build on some critical elements of an earlier review of Green's book by Hélène Landemore, "The Eyes of the People: Democracy in an Age of Spectatorship, by Jeffrey Edward Green," *Political Communication* 28 (2011).
4. See both Robert Goodin, "Sequencing Deliberative Moments," *Acta Politica* 40, no. 2 (July 2005): 182–96 (15); and Graham Smith, *Democratic Innovations: Designing Institutions for Citizen Participation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).
5. James S. Fishkin, *When the People Speak: Deliberative Democracy and Public Consultation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

6. See, e.g., Mark Warren and Hilary Pearse, *Designing Deliberative Democracy: The British Columbia Citizens' Assembly* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

7. See, e.g., this report by the World Bank for a review: http://siteresources.worldbank.org/PSGLP/Resources/ParticipatoryBudgeting.pdf.

8. http://www.nytimes.com/2012/04/01/nyregion/for-some-new-yorkers-a-grand-experiment-in-participatory-budgeting.html?pagewanted=all.

9. For the idea of sequencing deliberative moments and democratic innovations, see both Goodin, "Sequencing Deliberative Moments," and Smith, *Democratic Innovations*.

10. For this idea of democracy as a deliberative system, see John Parkinson and Jane Mansbridge, Deliberative Systems: Deliberative Democracy at the Large-Scale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

11. For the notion of "distributed deliberation," see Robert Goodin, *Reflective Democracy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), chap. 7.

12. Beth Simone Noveck, *Wiki Government: How Technology Can Make Government Better, Democracy Stronger, and Citizens More Powerful* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2009).

13. See my own analysis of this experiment in "Inclusive Constitution-Making: the Icelandic Experiment," *Journal of Political Philosophy* (forthcoming). Other experiments inspired in part by the Icelandic case are now taking place around the world. Most recently, Finland has engaged in one of the first attempts at crowdsourcing part of a legislative process. See Aitamurto and Landemore, "Democratic Participation and Deliberation in Crowdsourced Legislative Processes: The Case of the Off-Road Traffic in Finland," (Unpublished).

14. The website was created by democratic theory scholars aiming to "strengthen democracy by sharing knowledge" (http://participedia.net/).

15. Edmund Burke, "Speech on Being Elected to Bristol in 1774," in *Speeches of the Right Honorable Edmund Burke*, ed. James Burke (Dublin: James Duffy, 1853a), 130.

16. Burke, "Speech on Being Elected to Bristol in 1774," 130.

17. G. E. Weare, *Edmund Burke's Connection with Bristol* (Bristol: W. Bennett, 1894), 153–63.

18. Edmund Burke, "Speech on Taking Leave of the Electors at Bristol," in *Speeches of the Right Honorable Edmund Burke*, ed. James Burke (Dublin: James Duffy, 1853b), 168.

19. Burke, "Speech on Being Elected to Bristol in 1774," 130.

20. Terry Eagleton conceptualizes this kind of colonial political predicament as a "Joycean irony," or "establishing one's Irish identity by reference to a European capital." (Terry Eagleton, "Nationalism: Irony and Commitment," in *Nationalism, Colonialism, and Literature*, ed. Terry Eagleton, Fredric Jameson, and Edward Said [Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990], 24).

21. Burke, "Speech on Being Elected to Bristol in 1774," 130.

22. For the original film released on March 5, 2012, and other materials related to the work of the organization Invisible Children, see http://www.kony2012.com/.

23. See, e.g., T. M. S. Ruge, "'Kony 2012' Is Not a Revolution," *The New York Times*, the Opinion Pages, March 14, 2012.

24. Dinaw Mengestu, "Not a Click Away: Joseph Kony in the Real World," *Warscapes*, March 2012. See http://www.warscapes.com/reportage/not-click-away-joseph-kony-real-world.

25. Robert Alan Dahl, *Who Governs? Democracy and Power in an American City* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961).

26. David Livingstone Okumu, Akema Moses, and Sam Lawino, "Kony 2012 Screening in Gulu Leaves One Dead and Many Injured," *Acholi Times*, April 16, 2012. See http://www.acholitimes.com/index.php/8-acholi-news/154-kony-2012-screening-in-gulu-leaves-one-dead-and-many-injured.

27. Margaret Kohn, by contrast, finds his arguments about candor utopian and unrealistic. Margaret Kohn, "Review of *The Eyes of the People: Democracy in an Age of Spectatorship*," *Perspectives on Politics* 8 (2010): 1211.

28. Kohn, by contrast, reads Green as celebrating spectatorship (2010: 1211).

29. William Scheuerman likewise observes that "at many . . . junctures in his analysis, ocular democracy remains parasitic on vocal democracy." ("Democracy as Spectator Sport: Review of *The Eyes of the People: Democracy in an Age of Spectatorship*," *Radical Philosophy* 154 [2011]: 55).

30. Kohn reads Green as urging us to embrace the "ocular" model (which also suggests that they are alternatives rather than complements to one another (2010 1211, cf. 1212). Scheuerman likewise describes Green as arguing that the vocal model should "be supplanted by a novel ocular model of democracy" (2011, 54).

31. See Charles Taylor, "The Dynamics of Democratic Exclusion," *Journal of Democracy* 9 (1998); Charles Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004).

32. In this sense, it parallels what Judith Butler says about the universal (Judith Butler, "Restaging the Universal: Hegemony and the Limits of Formalism," in *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality: Contemporary Dialogues on the Left*, ed. J. Butler, E. Laclau, and S. Zizek [London: Verso, 2000]).

33. Because *EOP* recognizes that the origins of the ocular model may reside in vocal processes (leaders' desire to win the People's vote in elections), I do not think it is true that the book understands the public gaze as itself exerting its own autonomous power. *EOP* confronts this form of ocular power, associating it in particular with Sartre's notion of *le regard* as well as the folkloric tradition surrounding the "evil eye," but ultimately dissociates its conception of People's gaze from this approach because it is too speculative (see *EOP*, 12).

34. See Lester W. Milbrath, *Political Participation* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1965), 16–17.

35. Given the unideal aspects of mass spectatorship—and, in particular, that the unviability of the vocal model carries with it the problem of lack of full legitimacy for leaders and their projects—I share with Abbey the view that *EOP* ought not be conceived as celebrating spectatorship, something Landemore suggests

when she writes that "lack of voice and genuine self-rule" are "celebrated [in the book] as normatively appealing" and when she claims that *EOP* aims to "celebrate what we have" in the mode of "sour grapes." Like Landemore, Margaret Kohn also thinks that, in its approach to the spectatorship characteristic of ordinary political experience in mass politics, *EOP* "celebrates what other theorists lament." Margaret Kohn, "Review of *The Eyes of the People: Democracy in an Age of Spectatorship*," 1211.

36. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, trans. Maurice Cranston (London: Penguin, 1968), IV.2, 153.