

ABSTRACT:

For Rousseau, democracy was direct or it wasn't. As he famously put it, "the moment a people allows itself to be represented, it is no longer free: it no longer exists. The day you elect representatives is the day you lose your freedom." (Social Contract, III, 15) In other words, representative democracy is no democracy at all. Rousseau isn't alone in this belief, and today the disappointed of representative government have turned to celebrating anew the virtues of direct democracy as more true to the ideal of popular sovereignty, self-rule, and genuine political equality. This paper defends the thesis that Rousseau was, in fact, mistaken and that there is no salvation to be found in the ideal of direct democracy. If democracy as a political regime is always, in fact, representative, then the interesting question is not: direct or representative democracy? But instead: What kind of representation should we aim for? The paper argues that beyond the familiar electoral model there are at least two other models of representation that present attractive features: the first is based on sortition and the other on self-selection.