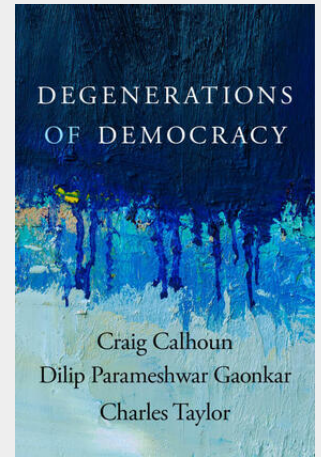


Degenerations of Democracy

Three leading thinkers analyze the erosion of democracy's social foundations and call for a movement to reduce inequality, strengthen inclusive solidarity, empower citizens, and reclaim pursuit of the public good. Democracy is in trouble. Populism is a common scapegoat but not the root cause. More basic are social and economic transformations eroding the foundations of democracy, ruling elites trying to lock in their own privilege, and cultural perversions like making individualistic freedom the enemy of democracy's other crucial ideals of equality and solidarity. In *Degenerations of Democracy* three of our most prominent intellectuals investigate democracy gone awry, locate our points of fracture, and suggest paths to democratic renewal. In Charles Taylor's phrase, democracy is a process, not an end state. Taylor documents creeping disempowerment of citizens, failures of inclusion, and widespread efforts to suppress democratic participation, and he calls for renewing community. Craig Calhoun explores the impact of disruption, inequality, and transformation in democracy's social foundations. He reminds us that democracies depend on republican constitutions as well as popular will, and that solidarity and voice must be achieved at large scales as well as locally. Taylor and Calhoun together examine how ideals like meritocracy and authenticity have become problems for equality and solidarity, the need for stronger articulation of the idea of public good, and the challenges of thinking big without always thinking centralization. Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar points out that even well-designed institutions will not integrate everyone, and inequality and precarity make matters worse. He calls for democracies to be prepared for violence and disorder at their margins—and to treat them with justice, not oppression. The authors call for bold action building on projects like Black Lives Matter and the Green New Deal. Policy is not enough to save democracy; it will take movements.



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