

US elections and Brexit, while giving new thrust to proceduralist accounts of democracy that separate the legitimacy of democratic outcomes from their epistemic quality, have increasingly put under strain epistemic justifications of democracy, which in turn hinge on such quality. Three responses are available. One is to bite the bullet, by remarking that the recent electoral outcomes are not bad results. Another is to highlight that democratic outcomes are qualitatively better only on average, so that less epistemically praise-worthy outcomes may always happen – black swans as they may be. A third response is to broaden the array of requirements that democratic regimes ought to fulfil to count as justified, by covering civil society organizations and notably traditional and social media's dealing with the phenomenon of so-called "fake news". Although permissible, this third response, however, has two major flaws. First, it seems to open the door to something close to a state-based enforcement of truth, which resonates badly to liberal ears and might be subject to abuse. Second, it imposes more demanding and blurry requirements for democratic institutions to count as legitimate.

A fourth alternative goes in a different direction and applies directly to democratic citizens. This paper explores such alternative, which consists in a conditional duty to vote informed. The idea is that citizens do not have a duty to vote, but a qualified duty to vote only once informed (henceforth DVI) about the relevant issues at stake. While compulsory voting has been recently debated (Brennan and Hill 2014), DVI has not received adequate attention. Such qualification would have two merits. On one hand, it responds to the main criticism against compulsory voting, which revolves around voters' ignorance (Caplan 2007, Brennan 2011). On the other, it helps dealing with one of the main flaws of the Condorcet Jury Theorem: individuals' competence.

This paper is structured as follows. Firstly, I introduce DVI and defend the epistemic advantages it warrants. In particular, I argue that competence is an issue for epistemic democrats, notwithstanding independence (Estlund 1994, Dietrich 2008). Secondly, I offer a model for its institutionalization, which roughly consists in a set of questions to be answered by each citizen right before voting. Finally, I address two objections that can be raised. What I call the 'pragmatic objection' targets the institutionalization of such a duty and contends that it would be troublesome for any democratic practice. I reply that my proposal would require political parties and civil society organizations to contribute to the set of questions posed in the test, encourage them to play a positive epistemic role with respect to the citizenry at large, as well as motivate citizens to acquire a minimal knowledge of their constitutional system and of the main dimensions of political conflicts. On the contrary, the 'principled objection' disputes the normative desirability of this proposal, because it would make political rights conditional on competence. While I acknowledge its contentiousness on moral and procedural grounds, I offer epistemic reasons to defend the justifiability of such a duty. I conclude by claiming that the institutionalization of such a duty is the logical consequence of an epistemic justification of democracy.