

# Deliberate Democracy, Epistemic Authorities, and Lack of Deference to Experts

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The paper focuses on the logical and semantic structure of the concept of political deference (trust/delegation) within deliberative democracy. The analysis centers on the phenomenon of deference to authorities, public leaders, and the media.

Deference is a multifaceted concept, weaving together reliance on others' opinions, obedience to political and knowledge-based (epistemic) authorities, and the evolution of how we communicate.

By applying the idea of deference, modern political philosophers examine how authorities, social groups, and parties shape citizens' and voters' opinions — both throughout history and in today's deliberative democracy. One of these democracy's greatest strengths is its focus on open dialogue and empowering citizens to oversee decision-makers at every level of society (Lafont, 2020).

Political deference reveals the main feature of the concept — the act of trusting or relying upon the political judgment of others. Although citizens in a democratic society are not generally required to obey the opinions of others, certain epistemic circumstances may obligate citizens to politically trust or submerge themselves to others, for example, voting for party decisions or supporting political leaders. All such situations may lead to controversial consequences. "...suppose an aspiring authoritarian political leader deploys misinformation and propaganda to gather support for political decisions that only benefit a small group of people, to the detriment of everyone else. Suppose they do so by claiming that while everyone else is corrupt, only their leadership promotes the true interests of the country, in an attempt to shut down any dissent and demand political deference from the citizens. Because such claims are not grounded in epistemic authority, they do not require political deference on my account" (Peter, 2023, p. 184). These circumstances need careful examination alongside analysis of concepts such as political and epistemic authority, political legitimacy, epistemic or cognitive responsibility, cognitive political power, and moral deference.

The paper explores how we defer to information by unpacking the meanings of disinformation, misinformation, fake news, and by examining how these shape public awareness. During times of war, deference to information splits into deference to democratic institutions and political elites, and deference to experts.

## References

- Lafont, C. (2020). *Democracy without shortcuts*. Oxford University Press.  
Peter, F. (2023). *The grounds of political legitimacy*. Oxford University Press