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The Real World of Democratic Theory

Ian Shapiro

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The Real World of Democratic Theory Ian Shapiro

In this book Ian Shapiro develops and extends arguments that have established him as one of today's leading democratic theorists. Shapiro is hardheaded about the realities of politics and power, and the difficulties of fighting injustice and oppression. Yet he makes a compelling case that democracy's legitimacy depends on pressing it into the service of resisting domination, and that democratic theorists must rise to the occasion of fashioning the necessary tools. That vital agenda motivates the arguments of this book.

Tracing modern democracy's roots to John Locke and the American founders, Shapiro shows that they saw more deeply into the dynamics of democratic politics than have many of their successors. Drawing on Lockean and Madisonian insights, Shapiro evaluates democracy's changing global fortunes over the past two decades. He also shows how elusive democracy can be by exploring the contrast between its successful establishment in South Africa and its failures elsewhere--particularly the Middle East. Shapiro spells out the implications of his account for long-standing debates about public opinion, judicial review, abortion, and inherited wealth--as well as more recent preoccupations with globalization, national security, and international terrorism.

Scholars, students, and democratic activists will all learn from Shapiro's trenchant account of democracy's foundations, its history, and its contemporary challenges. They will also find his distinctive democratic vision both illuminating and appealing.

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