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Truth and Democracy: A Problematic Relation

Abstract: In this paper I will analyze some of the most significant theories regarding the essential role played by the truth in deliberative democracy. After a brief presentation of the epistemic conception in its substantialist form and of the main objections it has to face, I will examine some of the epistemic conceptions that try to avoid the difficulties of substantial assumptions by adopting different strategies like: combining the epistemic dimension with a procedural one, invoking a kind of pragmatism about truth or replacing truth with a weaker epistemic value like trustworthiness. In the final section, I address the specific problem of how much does the truth matter in democracy and I will try to offer an explanation of the complex relation between the political and epistemic dimensions of democracy.

Keywords: deliberative democracy, truth, legitimacy, epistemic proceduralism, pragmatism, trustworthiness