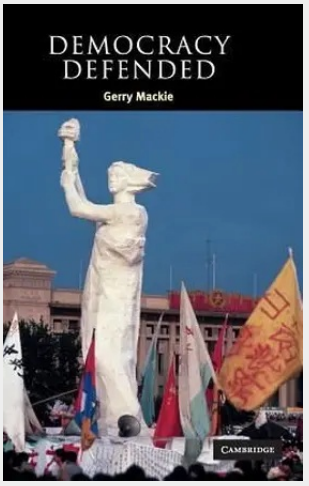
Mackie

Democracy Defended

Is there a public good? A prevalent view in political science is that democracy is unavoidably chaotic, arbitrary, meaningless, and impossible. Such scepticism began with Condorcet in the eighteenth century, and continued most notably with Arrow and Riker in the twentieth century. In this powerful book, Gerry Mackie confronts and subdues these long-standing doubts about democratic governance. Problems of cycling, agenda control, strategic voting, and dimensional manipulation are not sufficiently harmful, frequent, or irremediable, he argues, to be of normative concern. Mackie also examines every serious empirical illustration of cycling and instability, including Riker's famous argument that the US Civil War was due to arbitrary dimensional manipulation. Almost every empirical claim is erroneous, and none is normatively troubling, Mackie says. This spirited defence of democratic institutions should prove both provocative and influential.

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