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Suzuki, Takeshi; Llano, Stephen; Boogaart, Ronny; Garssen, Bart; Jansen, Henrike; Van Leeuwen, Maarten; ... ; Reuneker, Alex

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Republicacy: a New Compass in the Age of Trans-Science

TAKESHI SUZUKI & STEPHEN LLANO

*School of Information and Communication Meiji
University
Japan tsuzuki@meiji.ac.jp*

*Department of Rhetoric, Communication, and Theater St. John's
University
United States of America
llanos@stjohns.edu*

ABSTRACT: We provide adjustments to the way rhetoric and argumentation are approached in contemporary society as teachable and learnable arts. Considering republicacy as “an art of civic engagement”, we provide specific ideas about how to combine, edit, and alter extant theories of rhetorical and argumentation pedagogy to help citizens not only use their rights but effectively promote the development of the concept of “public engagement” for themselves and future generations.

KEYWORDS: argumentation pedagogy, civic engagement, debate, public engagement, republicacy, trans-science

1. INTRODUCTION

Whereas ‘privacy’ means the state of individuals being free from public attention¹, we argue that ‘republicacy’ is meant to be “the state of individuals being able to get

¹ Here, we are presenting one generic definition of privacy. Although we admit that there has been a lot of different definitions to ‘privacy’, we believe that we need to secure and develop the concept of ‘republicacy’, in addition to privacy, in the contemporary society. For different approaches to privacy, see, for example, ‘Privacy’ (2018) in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*: “Philosophical debates concerning definitions of privacy became prominent in the second half of the twentieth century, and are deeply affected by the development of privacy protection in the law. Some

involved with public affairs." We believe that each individual should be entitled to be a member of contemporary society who has rights and responsibilities for public engagement. The very concept of republicacy questions our identity when it comes to the issue of democratic political engagement in three ways: First, as a taxpayer, are we competent enough to judge how our taxed money is used effectively? If we think so, with what criteria should we evaluate how our taxed money is used effectively? Next, as an eligible voter, are we competent enough to evaluate how candidates are performing in campaigns? If we think so, with what basis should we evaluate how likely we are to achieve our policy expectations? Finally, as a world citizen, are we competent enough to judge our governmental policy goals, especially if they can meet sustainable development goals? If we think so, with what standards should we employ the long-term global goals? In the age of unexpected and unprecedented threats such as climate change, terrorism, and the Covid-19 pandemic, merely being malcontents or wishy-washy cynical people make ourselves at the mercy of the powers that be. Things never look gloomier when experts and politicians are forced to make judgments about the future based on evidence which does not exist at present. Why do we have to re-think about the above three questions? The reason is that we now live in the age of trans-science.

Already half a century ago, Alvin Weinberg (1972, p. 209) argues:

Much has been written about the responsibility of the scientist in resolving conflicts which arise from the interaction between science and society. Ordinarily the assumption is made that a particular issue on which scientific knowledge is drawn into the resolution of a political conflict... The politician, or some other representatives of society, is then expected to proceed

defend privacy as focusing on control over information about oneself (Parent, 1983), while others defend it as a broader concept required for human dignity (Bloustein, 1964), or crucial for intimacy (Gerstein, 1978; Inness, 1992). Other commentators defend privacy as necessary for the development of varied and meaningful interpersonal relationships (Fried, 1970, Rachels, 1975), or as the value that accords us the ability to control the access others have to us (Gavison, 1980; Allen, 1988; Moore, 2003), or as a set of norms necessary not only to control access but also to enhance personal expression and choice (Schoeman, 1992), or some combination of these (DeCew, 1997). Discussion of the concept is complicated by the fact that privacy appears to be something we value to provide a sphere within which we can be free from interference by others, and yet it also appears to function negatively, as the cloak under which one can hide domination, degradation, or physical harm to women and others."

in one direction or another. The scientist and science provide the means; the politician and politics decide the ends. This view of the role of the scientist, and indeed of science itself, is, of course, oversimplified, in particular because even where there are clear scientific answers to the scientific questions involved in a public issue, ends and means are hardly separable.

Weinberg (1972, p. 209, *emphasis original*) hence defines “questions which can be asked of science and yet *which cannot be answered by science*” as “*trans-science* for these questions since, though are, epistemologically speaking, questions of fact and can be stated in the language of science, they are unanswerable by science; they transcend science”. Under such circumstances, we cannot leave critical decisions to neither scientists nor politicians. We should not only ask them to debate and discuss in the public sphere but also make ourselves listen and, hopefully, participate in such public debate and discussion.

More recently, in April of 2017, scientists around the world organized for a “March for Science” with the express purpose of calling attention to the importance of having scientific evidence inform public policy. Then President Donald Trump had proposed cutting funding to climate change research in the EPA and publicly questioned the reality of climate change. In response, scientists organized political demonstrations around the world to call attention to the importance of science. Around 150,000 people showed up for the march in Washington D.C. on April 22, with other events occurring in cities around the world.

This event was an exigence that called for explanation. Normally, scientists are not perceived as political, offering evidence and reasons through their research that inform the national debate on scientific issues. John Holdren (2017), a science adviser to President Obama, told *The Guardian* that, “Scientists are understanding that they have to become activists, that they have to speak up, that they have to be heard.” Christian Samper, President of the Wildlife Conservation society, explained science as, “behind the good news and bad news of wildlife conservation. It has nothing to do with the fake news. Science is the antithesis of fake news.”

Accounting for the demonstration leaned heavily on the dual points of needing to “find a voice” while still remaining “factual” and “real.” Bill Nye (2017), who was the honorary chair of the March for Science, argued that “Science has always been

political but we don't want to be partisan. Nye articulates the old topoi that science informs politics, but does not create politics.

In a similar way, democracy is thought of to have to meet the same burden. Publics are told in countless ways to educate themselves and be informed on issues and to make sure to vote in all opportunities to do so. At the same time, they are asked to make judgements on issues that defy their perceived capacity for judgement. The March for Science protesters can judge between good and bad scientific information and research, but are uncertain how to communicate the importance of what they do in the political realm. People are eager to share opinions, but are often without guidance when it comes to finding out about the heart of issues that appear on the ballot.

We believe that the gulf perceived between fake news and scientific fact does not actually exist. Instead, we like to think of it as a place for productive and creative engagement. The traditions of rhetoric and argumentation stem from, and allow for, safe passage across this gulf through their practice as creative arts of engagement. We seek to use those traditions of praxis to inform our concept of political engagement we term 'republicacy' – capacity building along the lines of creating comfortable relationships between information and deliberative judgment about normative decision making. We believe that democracy is possible and can be successful if more practice in argument and rhetorical play are introduced into public discussions.

The March for Science is not novel nor is it a disruption. Since at least the 1970s scientists have been arguing that scientific information should take more of a central position in public policy decision making. When scientists turn to advocacy, they mimic the protest march as that's what they think advocacy "looks like". Likewise, when citizens base their decisions or votes on factual information, they choose things that "look like the truth." We believe both actions are understandable and normal. We seek to intervene by saying that a third conception, the conception of being involved in a democratic system of republican governance can open up options for deliberation and decision making that allow for much more complex responses to the incredibly contingent world of environmental, social, and economic problems we face.

Given that, there are three roles of republicacy: nurturing individuals as arguers, developing the taking-up-mechanism of their opinions, promoting interaction between people, politicians, and media. In order to develop republicacy, for instance, debate education can be an invaluable tool in the following areas: in media, we should teach

people critical assessment of both sides, evidence-based decision-making, and saving information minorities; in education, we should guarantee the right to higher education, and active learning curriculum; and in public deliberation, we should explore how to cope with class divisions when we are faced with (inter-)national crisis.

2. HISTORICAL BACKDROP OF THE PROBLEM

We want to start a discussion with why people need to acquire republicacy. There are two justifications for republicacy. One is philosophical, and the other is psychological. The first justification comes from the area of political philosophy. This work argues that there is a distinction between a good and a bad governance, and we should work toward identifying and selecting the better government form. David Miller (2003, p. 2) defines political philosophy as “an investigation into the nature, causes, and effects of good and bad government”. Based upon Ambrogio Lorenzatti’s mural in which a demonic ruler surrounded by vices like Avarice, Cruelty, and Pride, Miller (2003, pp. 2-3) proposed reasons why making such distinctions are essential: “The first is that good and bad government profoundly affect the quality of human lives. [...], it really makes a difference to our lives whether we are governed well or badly. We cannot turn our back on politics, retreat into private life, and imagine that the way we are governed will not have profound effects on our personal happiness”. Under the world of fake news and echo chambers, the legacy media are losing the power to provide a public forum for people to engage in critical policy-making and keep such a forum to function. Hence, we need media to promote republicacy both to educate people and to make politicians responsible for deliberative democracy. Amy Gutman and Dennis Thompson (1996, p. 12), for example, argue: “The conception of deliberative democracy that we defend here seeks to diminish that deficit in theory and politics. The conception consists of three principles—reciprocity, publicity, and accountability—that regulate the process of politics, and three others—basic liberty, basic opportunity, and fair opportunity—that governs the content of policies”.

The second idea proposed by Miller (2003, p. 3, *emphasis original*) is that “the form our government takes is not predetermined: we have a choice to make. The [Lorenzatti] portrayal of evil government was not just an academic exercise: it was a reminder of what might happen if the rulers of the city failed in their duty to the people,

or if the rulers of the city failed in their duty to the people, or if the people failed in *their* duty to keep a watchful eye on their representatives”. Under the system of representative democracy, we are merely forced to choose hopefuls to be elected so that they may achieve what we expect them to achieve. We have little means to check how responsible they are against their promises once they are elected until the next election comes. Thus, we need republicacy both as attitude and action by the people for making the democratic mechanism function well.

The third and final idea presented by Miller (2003, p. 3) is that “we can know what distinguishes good government from bad: we can trace the effects of different forms of government. In other words, there is such a thing as political knowledge”. Our answer to Miller’s claim is yes and no. Our answer is yes in the sense that we can trace the effects of different forms of government if it is fully examined, explained by politicians and media and, at the same time, ascertained by their electorate. But our answer is no in the sense that even if such effects of different policies are analyzed by the government, the complexity of contemporary society makes it extremely difficult to explain the effects of public policies, especially when they are involved with international issues on a long-term basis. Therefore, it is essential for global leaders and citizens to engage these questions productively. We believe that republicacy is a missing set of practices here.

The second justification for republicacy is psychological. As Aristotle defines rhetoric as “the ability, in each particular case, to see the available means of persuasion,” we can assume that humans have a capacity or potential to be persuaded. Similarly, we can assume that human beings have both chances to be good and risks to be evil. Scott Peck (1983, p. 215) states:

any research into the nature of evil is likely to prove embarrassing, not only to those who are the designated subjects of the [1972 MyLai incident of the Vietnam War] research but also to the researchers themselves. If we are to study the nature of human evil, it is doubtful how clearly we will be able to separate *them* from *us*; it most likely be our own natures we are examining. Undoubtedly, this potential for embarrassment is one the reasons we have thus far failed to develop a psychology of evil.

As argued already, the environment in which contemporary people are living is filled with fake news and angry or even evil messages. Hence, we should train ourselves so that we may become essential members of a democratic society with critical insights who can weigh proposed alternatives by politicians, for instance.

The second psychological justification for acquiring republicacy is that human beings are more likely to be evil in times of stress than in times of comfort. Peck (1983, p. 222) explains again:

it is appropriate to comment on the relationship between goodness and stress. He who behaves nobly in easy times—a fair-weather friend, so to speak—may not be so noble when the chips are down. Stress is the test for goodness. The truly good are those who in the time of stress do not desert their integrity, their maturity, their sensitivity. Nobility might be defined as the capacity not to regress in response to degradation, not to become blunted in the face of pain, to tolerate the agonizing and retain intact. As I have said elsewhere, “one measure—and perhaps the best measure—of a person’s greatness is the capacity for suffering.”

Therefore, Peck (1983) asks: “If we grow out of evil and narcissism, and since we normally regress in the face of stress, can we not say that human beings are more likely to be evil in times of stress than in times of comforts?” To say nothing of growing economic gaps between the poor and the rich in any and every industrialized country, we are under the stress of feeling that things are unfair and even cruel. The solution is not to complain or count on irresponsible leaders with extreme promises, but to engage in public policy-making so that we may make a society which may meet our expectations. That is one of the reasons why we need republicacy to be promoted in times of stress. Peck (1983, p. 223) argues: “most people would be followers. More than anything else, it is probably a matter of laziness. It is simply easy to follow, and much easier to be a follower than a leader. There is no need to apologize over complex decisions, plan ahead, exercise initiative, risk unpopularity, or exert much courage”. Here we do not ask everyone to be a leader, but we do ask people to try to judge if someone is a right or wrong leader before following them. We believe republicacy to be the essential practice of the follower and the leader in symbiosis. Republicacy requires the leader and follower to exist not as separate entities but entities in conversation, questioning the entire decision making process.

The final psychological justification for republicacy is that in a highly sophisticated society, we tend to form specialized groups where evil may easily be rather fragmented into different sections. Peck (1983, p. 226) argues, hence, “specialized individuals are in a position to pass the moral buck to some other specialized cog in the machine or onto the machine itself”. He goes on to argue: “The follower is not a whole person. He whose accepted role it is neither to think nor lead has defaulted his capacity to think and lead. And because thinking and leading are no longer his specialty or duty, he usually defaults his conscience in the bargain” (Peck, 1983, pp. 226-227). Such specialization is seldom either accidental or random, but it is usually highly selective. Any specialty group is a particular breed as a result of both self-selection and group selection. Hence, Peck (1983, p. 228) draws three general principles regarding specialized group:

First, the specialized group inevitably develops a group character that is self-reinforcing. Second, specialized groups are therefore particularly prone to narcissism—that is, to experiencing themselves as uniquely right and superior in relation to other homogeneous groups. Finally, the society at large—partly through the self-selection process described—employs specific types of people to perform its specialized roles—as, for instance, it employs aggressive, conventional men to perform its police functions.

In essence, the reason why we should explore the idea of Republicacy is that each field expert is often interested in analyzing causes of the problem solely from his/her own field, but what really matters is how to cope with such a problem from multiple perspectives. In the past, there have been a lot of studies about how people should be better informed or how messages should be better structured, but the very concept of Republicacy asked the question about how media, education, and ourselves should be better prepared in this contemporary age to cope with group evil. Republicacy brings all aspects of democratic, civil society together in conversation as a potential solution to the challenges that democratic orders face.

3. PRACTICAL NECESSITIES FOR REPUBLICACY IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

There are three pressing needs to develop such a concept if we want to make ourselves get involved with the democratic process as a member of a publicly open society. Initially, our democratic society is threatened by what we call “chaotic leadership.” Lolly Daskas (2021) argues: “The most effective leaders work to create an environment that will stimulate, motivate and develop people—who in turn will bring their best to work. But many otherwise qualified bosses and leaders share a need to create chaotic cultures that keep everyone in a heightened state of anxiety.” As globalization develops, each state government’s capacity to control industrial, economic, environmental, defense and trade policies are increasingly declining. Under such circumstances, more and more people are dissatisfied with the status quo which is leaning toward a more perfect international order and collaboration. Although the increased international order and collaboration can benefit the establishment, the powerless often find it difficult to enjoy such benefits. How those angry and dissatisfied people are likely to support the domestically-driven politicians is illustrative in the Trump phenomena 2016-2020 (see Torres & Sable, 2018; Hart, 2020).

Specifically, chaotic leaders first intentionally create social chaos in order to place themselves as the possible leader who can address it. Chaotic leaders prefer confusion over order, division over unity, and hatred over mutual help. By creating a number of social destabilization and unpredictability, they try to appear the one by whom the people should depend. In the past, leaders were supposed to provide a course of action for a better future. The birth of the Trump administration in 2016 was a prime example of chaotic leadership (Johnson, 2018). Some general public follow chaotic leaders not because they believe in what chaotic leaders promise, but because they want to believe in what they fight for. Appeal to fear and hate, for example, worked to strengthen his own support bases for a short run, but only contributed to the keeping and expanding social and racial divisions for a long run.

The second and related practical need for republicacy is that how we can maximize the opportunity to achieve *the* good is increasingly uncertain at best and hopeless at worst. The power of labor unions is declining (Hogler, 2015), school tuition is skyrocketing (Goodnight, Hingstman, & Green, 2014), and salaries are not rising

(Miller, 2020). Although the Baby Boomers could enjoy a better standard of living than the Silent Majority, and the Generation X enjoy a better standard of living than the Baby Boomers, that is not the case of the Millennials. Their standard of living would be worse than the Generation X. Hence, the Millennial can no longer entirely depend on representative democracy, and they need a stronger public engagement in political decision-making in terms of education, social welfare, industrial development, and environmental policies. What is needed is how to reflect the young people's hopes to create a better society and future by maximizing their opportunities to achieve what they wish and want.

The final practical and pressing need for republicacy is that we are faced with the fragile nature of contemporary risk society. Namely, the more sophisticated our society becomes, the more vulnerable we become to complex risks, such as market crash, natural disaster, natural disaster, nuclear accidents, terrorism and pandemic. Specifically, Anthony Giddens (1990) outlines risk profiles of modernity:

1. *Globalization of risk* in the sense of *intensity*: for example, nuclear war can threaten the survival of humanity.
 2. *Globalization of risk* in the sense of the *expanding number of contingent events* which affect everyone or at least large numbers of people on the planet: for example, changes in the global division of labor.
 3. Risk stemming from the *created environment*, or *social nature*: the infusion of human knowledge into the material environment.
 4. The development of *institutionalized risk environments* affecting the life-chances of millions: for example, investment markets.
 5. *Awareness of risk as risk*: the “knowledge gaps” in risks cannot be converted into “certainties” by religious or magical knowledge.
 6. The *well-distributed awareness of risk*: many of the dangers we face collectively are known to wide publics.
 7. *Awareness of the limitations of expertise*: no expert system can be wholly expert in terms of the consequences of the adoption of expert principles.
- (pp. 124-125)

What is missing here in the list proposed by Giddens is an increasing tendency of people's motivation and ability for public engagement in political decision-making. As communication is generally defined as the process by which shared meaning is created, we cannot emphasize too much the role by which people play in changing and improving the political infrastructure of a contemporary society. That is, all of the above concerns can be constituted in varying ways thorough mutual engagement by the stakeholders.

True, we need to protect ourselves from increasingly growing social and political risks. However, we need to not only think about possible solutions but also understand the core and hurdles for such solutions. As the COVID-19 pandemic exposed, the people are sometimes happy to sacrifice their privacy at the cost of security. If convinced, they are even willing to provide personal information, to be traced their meeting travel records, etc., to secure themselves from imminent risks. However, under such circumstances, the so-called Big Data can be manipulated for the advantages of powerful people, industries, and institutions. Some even predict that Artificial Intelligence (AI) can and will deprive human beings of their job and the power to make decisions. What is needed is exactly the opposite. Namely, we need to foster our intellectual ability for assessment, innovation, and critical decision-making. Of course, the question is how. Given that, we need to develop and secure the concept of republicacy, or the state of being able to get involved with public affairs for general people. Republicacy is not a mere theory or concept to educate the general public to get involved with public issues and their decision-making process, but it is a philosophical commitment to the program to develop and secure a broad and well-balanced forum for public debate and discussion.

4. CONCLUSION

Republicacy calls for the "next step" in debate pedagogy. It is clearly not enough to act under the familiar banner of, "we teach critical thinking." Further action is required given the nature of the trans-science, complex risk, chaotic leadership global situation. Debate, under republicacy, becomes more of a creative art than an assessment and judgement tool. The aim of which is to help students think about the question, "what is civic virtue?"

We start with our pedagogical approach by agreeing with Robert Asen (2018, p. 299) when he argues that publics need to be “built” and require “tending”. We believe debate pedagogy can accomplish this in micro by shifting from the stance that one has to carefully analyze the proposition by researching traditional evidence but articulating that evidence in ways that consider the public “tended to” instead of just refuted or informed. By imagining participants in debate as the direct policy makers, a pedagogical lacune is missed here by excluding relationships with others. Thinking of approaching debate as the pedagogy of “building and tending” the public would change how debate is taught, performed, and evaluated.

Bringing the concept of publics into the pedagogy of debate is radically new. Instead of the imagined public in the form of the judge who represents the “reasonable voter” in forms of debate such as British Parliamentary, or the specialized critic of argument as imagined in policy debate, this shift in the rubric requires students to have a look at what’s around them in their rhetorical and political environment and consider how networks of people might hear and understand their position. The previous models of judging are biased completely toward critical thinking – the most carefully supported an analyzed argument should win the day. Republicacy’s pedagogical model requires the addition of creativity – is that analysis offered in a way that will tend to or help build the publics that exist around us?

Most students imagine themselves in the role of the policy-maker when debating. They imagine themselves as directly addressing the problems facing societies and the world as an empowered decision-maker. This reinforces a pedagogy where the winning argument is the one that addresses the best solution to the problem given what the evaluators think are the best conceptions of argument and evidence. The Republicacy debate standard would have us move away from the totalizing view of only critical thinking – right argument, correct evidence – and imagine the impact of these statements on publics, and whether the publics would consider those arguments and take them up in order to help them reach decision makers.

Asen’s view of imagination is vital here: “Collective imagining takes shape through discursive engagement among interlocutors in contexts of varying structure, scope, and formality. Discourse functions in this process not as a vehicle for transmitting information and beliefs but as a constitutive force” (2002, p. 349). The power of imagination in public discourse cannot be ignored. We believe debate

pedagogy should strike a careful balance between two kinds of imagined discourses: One is the discourse of the “convincing argument,” which is the established mode of teaching debate. The other is our introduction of imagining the “publics” involved in such debates and how to address them to call attention to the imaginary connection we have to problems and solutions. It is not enough to recognize the difficulty of a problem or the incapability of elected officials to address it. Debate is a key place where one can learn and practice constituting what counts as good argument and good evidence, but only if attentive to the rhetorical dimensions of such judgements.

Critics and teachers should aim the pedagogy of debate as convincing the public not solving the problem. Instead of addressing like-minded technocrats or bureaucrats, debate should have an element of how and what is used to address the public and their conceptions of the social good. A winning position is one that provides publics what they need and require while also maintaining awareness that an evidence standard is a result of discourse, not prior to it, and such an imagined standard can be exclusive and harmful of the vary relationships we need to face the challenges of our societies.

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