



What Democracy Is For: On Freedom and Moral Government

Stein Ringen

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In this provocative book, Stein Ringen argues that the world's democracies are failing to live up to their ideals--the United States and Great Britain most especially. The core value of democracy, he contends, is freedom, the freedom to live a good life according to one's own choosing. Yet he shows that democracy's freedom is on the decline. Citizens are increasingly distrustful of political systems weighted by money, and they don't participate in political affairs as they once did. Ringen warns of the risks we face if this trend continues, and puts forth an ambitious proposal for democratic reforms.

The issues that concern him are ones that should concern us all. They include education, poverty, the social and economic roles of families, the lack of democracy in our economic lives, and the need to rejuvenate municipal democracy. Along the way, Ringen proposes policy solutions aimed at restoring democracy, such as universal vouchers for education, substituting the principle of individual insurance for social-welfare pensions, and rethinking how we measure poverty in rich and poor countries. He calls for the revival of local democracy, a democratically grounded global economy, and the protection of political democracy from the transgressions of economic power.

The way to protect democracy is not to cheer it, but to reform it. *What Democracy Is For* offers a bold defense of democratic ideals, grounded in real reforms.

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