

## Democracy – Part 3: Mediocracy

The idea that the majority is always right, or that the majority *defines* rightness, is a **meme** which has contributed to the spread and legitimisation of democratic institutions. Nevertheless, as we have **argued**, it is a false idea and a mistaken justification. Despite its historically progressive role, it has also had, and continues to have, a destructive effect on political and moral discussion in the West.

New ideas always start out being held by a minority. Hence this meme automatically demonises new ideas. For example, **we** think the forcing children to go to school against their will is **wrong**. Most people still do not agree with us in this matter. The majority-is-right meme has the effect that anyone who challenges this form of coercion is challenging the democratic principle itself. And worse: since the majority is right, and in consequence has the right to rule, there is a ready-made argument that they ought to take control and suppress home education. Otherwise (for instance) weird extremists will allow their children to run around in ignorance rather than forcing them to go to school.

And so it is in every case when something better is proposed. The meme authorises, and then by the same logic mandates, the rule of the mediocre: — mediocracy.

The meme even makes it difficult to state criticisms of prevailing views without being misinterpreted. For example, if we say “Anti-semitism is rife in Europe.”, how will people interpret this statement? The principle that the majority is always right allows only interpretations like:

- the Nazis are about to come to power, or
- a tiny minority are playing up again, or
- **The World’s** writers are paranoid slanderers of The European People.

Yet it is possible, without any of those things being true, to hold the opinion that a large number of nice, non-Nazi people give credence to ludicrous conspiracy theories in which Jews play a large part. The idea that the majority is always right makes this suggestion almost literally unthinkable to many.

And no, we are not advocating that Europeans be deprived of the

right to vote.

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## How to change the majority opinion

The majority is right meme demonises new ideas

Yes, most especially new moral ideas.

However, the meme has almost zero effect on new consumer product ideas especially in sexy areas like mobile information technology.

In order to bring about moral climate change perhaps the key is to identify small economic steps which take us closer to the point where the majority moral opinion may tip over.

For example, how do we best promote choice between school and home education?

One idea: by creating business plans for an asynchronous internet exam and qualification system.

A company creates links over the internet between examiners, academics, students and a dynamic knowledge base of problems and tasks. Students can be examined in private booths equipped with large screens and broadband connections. Multiple choice, written paragraph style answers, sketches and diagrams, oral questioning would all be possible. You pay a fee and take the test, which is pass-or-fail. Age, attendance record, number of previous attempts and classroom bullies would all become irrelevant. The market sorts out which qualifications are most valuable to employers and universities. Global standards emerge.

If such a thing happened parents would quickly turn against schools and syllabuses as they themselves are liberated by just-in-time knowledge and fresh opportunities. It would change the way they see education, and it would become more obvious what a poor motive for learning is boredom (the last remaining weapon in the school arsenal). Children would learn faster on the internet at home and with friends. Private tutors would spring up to assist small local groups.

The moral machinery of ideas to sanction all this (which already exists) would then be heartily embraced by the majority.

by [Tom Robinson](#) on Mon, 01/17/2005 - 06:33 | [reply](#)

### Example of a good idea.

Idea: Economic Tipping Points

"In order to bring about moral climate change perhaps the key is to

identify small economic steps which take us closer to the point where the majority moral opinion may tip over."

The majority moral opinion always does tip based on small and repetitive glimpses of a different order. Economic steps are visible everywhere people are affected by them. If something which on the surface is neutral is perceived as good by the majority, by "goodness" the moral climate changes. While economic change is not the only view of "goodness" it is an all-pervasive one. Everyone consumes.

by a reader on Mon, 01/17/2005 - 17:14 | [reply](#)

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