

Effortless English

The Role of Media 1

Publish Date: March 28, 2007

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The role of the media in **contemporary** politics forces us to ask what kind of a society we want to live in, and in particular **in what sense** of democracy do we want this to be a democratic society? Let me begin by **counter-posing** two different **conceptions** of democracy.

One conception of democracy **has it** that a democratic society is one in which the public has the means to participate in some meaningful way in the management of their own **affairs** and the **means** of information are open and free. If you **look up** “democracy” in the dictionary you'll get a definition something like that.

An **alternative** conception of democracy is that the public must be **barred from** managing their own affairs and the means of information must be kept **narrowly** and **rigidly** controlled. That may sound like an **odd** conception of democracy, but it's important to understand that it is the **prevailing** conception.

In fact, it has long been, not just **in operation**, but even **in theory**. There's a long history that goes back to the earliest modern democratic revolutions in seventeenth century England which **largely expresses** this **point of view**. I'm just going to **keep to** the modern period and say a few words about how that **notion** of democracy develops, and why and how the problem of media and **disinformation** enters within that **context**.

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contemporary: adj. modern, current

in what sense: in what manner, in what way or kind

counter-posing: v. comparing

conceptions: n. ideas, theories

has it: v. says

affairs: n. lives, life issues & activities

means: n. methods, ways

look up: v. search for and find, look for and find

alternative: adj. different

barred from: v. prevented from, stopped from

narrowly: adv. in a careful and tight way, in a small way

rigidly: adv. without flexibility, in a strict & tough way

odd: adj. strange

prevailing: adj. common, majority

in operation: in reality, in use, related to how something is done

in theory: in idea, related to idea

largely: adv. mostly

point of view: n. opinion, belief

keep to: v. stay with, stick with

notion: n. idea

disinformation: n. wrong information, lies, propaganda

context: n. situation, environment.