demonstrated by the low turnouts at European elections. And there is the 'Roman' strategy: the way to engage the public is to make better provision for 'bread' and 'games'. The 'bread' means the tangible things that improve people's lives: reducing the costs of mobile phone calls in Europe or subsidising farmers in deprived regions. Public enthusiasm remains limited, however. The 'games' are the political knockabout, the conflicts, played out on a knife-edge. The euro crisis produced sharp oppositions in public opinion in the different member states, but at the same time the crisis ensured that, for the first time in history, 'Europe' became deeply embedded in all national debates. In fact, the fiercest debates about Europe rage in a country where the euro has not even been introduced: Great Britain. In the English-language version of his book, Van Middelaar launches into a discussion of the referendum on Europe that has been promised by Prime Minister David Cameron. That creates an imperative to think carefully about the usefulness and added value of European integration, not just in Great Britain, but in all member states.

This book is much more than an academic quest to find the ultimate driver of European integration. It looks at events from sometimes surprising angles; it is an enjoyable read; it is very well documented; and it is written in an extremely witty style – something that is sadly lacking in the traditional literature on European politics. That alone makes *The Passage to Europe* worth reading.

Hendrik Vos
Translated by Julian Ross

Luuk Van Middelaar, The Passage to Europe, translated from the Dutch by Liz Waters, Yale University Press, 2013 (ISBN 978 0 300 18112 8).

From Plato to the European Union
The Road to Democracy

Democracy is probably the most famous 'contested concept'. That means that there is quite some disagreement about what it exactly means. There are thus many good reasons for investing a bit in a good understanding of the concept and of its many components. One possible and always quite fruitful approach is to look back, to see how democracy came about, how it evolved, how aspects of it were criticized, changed and rethought along the way.
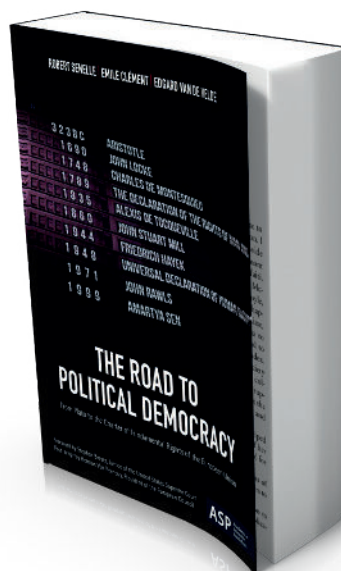
In *The Road to Political Democracy* Robert Senelle, Emile Clément and Edgard Van de Velde opt for that approach. They want to trace the history of political democracy from Plato to the fundamental Rights of the European Union. That is a long journey, and the road is winding and complex, with many side roads and dead-ends. One of the reasons for that is of course the multidimensional nature of democracy. For the authors of the book, political democracy means "(...) a formal democratic system wherein political and economic freedom is guaranteed and in which an equilibrium between equality and liberty can be established. The rule of law and the redistributionist principle are inherent features of such a system" (p. 26). That is a lot. Political democracy thus refers among other things to rules about participation and representation, to the right to govern the people, to a political culture of equality, to policy goals like redistribution, to (supreme) courts and their role in safeguarding the rules, and to human rights.

The book has an interesting and original format. Between the foreword of Stephen Breyer, Justice of the US Supreme Court and the postscript by Herman Van Rompuy, President of the European Council, there are two parts. The first one is written by the authors and describes the 'red wire' in the history of democracy from Antiquity till today. It does so by looking at four major issues. The first is the question whether there is

indeed a need for societies of men to be ruled, i.e. whether a society can function properly without politics. The second is an endeavour to classify political systems and in particular to search for a distinction between democratic and other systems. The third is the question of the grounds on which a ruler has the right to govern. Rule by turn, the importance of a middle class, the rule of law and the need for education are then – based on Aristotle – the topics that the authors explore. They do so by pointing at the contributions of major political thinkers. The usual suspects of political theory and philosophy are presented in sequence and confronted with each other in their search for the best way to govern society.

The second part – which is actually the bulk of the book – presents the road workers and a few of the important building blocks assembled by them. The road workers include authors like Plato, John Locke, Montesquieu, Rousseau, Benjamin Constant, Tocqueville, John Stuart Mill, Friedrich Hayek, Hannah Arendt, Robert Nozick, John Rawls and Francis Fukuyama. The building blocks include the Magna Carta, the Habeas Corpus Act, the French Declaration of Human and Civil Rights (1789) and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. For each of these the authors of *The Road to Political Democracy* have selected excerpts of the writings or of the document, and each of them is situated in its historical perspective. This works quite well. One can travel leisurely along the road towards political democracy, and appreciate the importance of many problems that have been discussed and discussed again in the course of the last 25 centuries.

'The road to political democracy' is not a book that one can read from cover to cover. The road to democracy is too long for that, and requires that one takes a rest once in a while. It is a book that should be savoured in little pieces, allowing each of them to sink in and allowing oneself to travel back and forth, which is actually what democracy has also done. In the end, the reader will know a lot about the difficult quest for that intriguing thing called democracy. However, this reader was still a bit disappointed. I found very little on the current debates about democracy. There is very little on decision-making procedures, on elections and electoral rules, on varying notions of representation, on the evolution of the nation states in which a formal political democracy has developed and on the transfer of decision-making powers from the nation state to other actors. If one listens to the current debates, it is difficult to say that the quest has been completed with the European Charter and that democracy has been fully developed and consolidated.

Even without all the things that I missed, this fascinating and nicely presented book has over 1000 pages. That probably tells us something about democracy as a contested and multi-dimensional concept.

Kris Deschouwer