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This book offers a novel account of key features of modern representative democracy. Working from the rational actor tradition, it builds a middle ground between orthodox political theory and the economic analysis of politics. Standard economic models of politics emphasise the design of the institutional devices of democracy as operated by essentially self-interested individuals. This book departs from that model by focusing on democratic desires alongside democratic devices, stressing that important aspects of democracy depend on the motivation of democrats and the interplay between devices and desires. Individuals are taken to be not only rational, but also somewhat moral. The authors argue that this approach provides access to aspects of the debate on democratic institutions that are beyond the narrowly economic model. They apply their analysis to voting, elections, representation, political parties and the separation and division of powers, providing a wide-ranging discussion of the design of democratic institutions.

Geoffrey Brennan is a Research Professor in the Research School of the Social Sciences at the Australian National University, where he was Director between 1991 and 1996. He is author of *The Power to Tax* (with James Buchanan, 1980), *The Reason of Rules* (with James Buchanan, 1985) and *Democracy and Decision* (with Loren Lomasky, 1993).

Alan Hamlin is Professor of Economics at the University of Southampton. He is the author of *Ethics, Economics and the State* (1986), Editor of *Ethics and Economics* (1996), and co-editor of *The Good Polity* (with Philip Pettit, 1989) and of *Market Capitalism and Moral Values* (with Sam Brittan, 1995).

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PUBLISHED BY THE PRESS SYNDICATE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE  
 The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge, United Kingdom

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS  
 The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge, CB2 2RU, UK [www.cup.cam.ac.uk](http://www.cup.cam.ac.uk)  
 40 West 20th Street, New York, NY 10011-4211, USA [www.cup.org](http://www.cup.org)  
 10 Stamford Road, Oakleigh, Melbourne 3166, Australia  
 Ruiz de Alarcón 13, 28014 Madrid, Spain

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First published 2000

Printed in the United Kingdom at the University Press, Cambridge

Typeset in Minion 10.5/12pt [CE]

*A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library*

*Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication Data*

Brennan, Geoffrey, 1944–  
 Democratic devices and desires / by Geoffrey Brennan and Alan Hamlin.  
 p. cm. – (Theories of institutional design)  
 Includes bibliographical references (p. ).  
 ISBN 0 521 63020 7 (hb). – ISBN 0 521 63977 8 (pb)  
 1. Democracy – Economic aspects.  
 2. Political science – Economic aspects.  
 I. Hamlin, Alan P., 1951–. II. Title. III. Series.  
 JC423.B783 2000  
 321.8 – dc21 99–36185 CIP

ISBN 0 521 63020 7 hardback  
 ISBN 0 521 63977 8 paperback

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This book is dedicated to Margaret and Jan,  
and Robyn, Philip and Beth

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Contents

<i>List of figures</i>	<i>page</i> viii
<i>Preface and acknowledgements</i>	ix
1 Introduction	1
<b>PART I Democratic desires</b>	
2 On human nature: beyond <i>homo economicus</i>	17
3 Moral dispositions	34
4 Economising on virtue	51
5 Political mechanisms	67
6 Mechanisms and dispositional choice	87
7 Problems of democratic politics	98
<b>PART II Democratic devices</b>	
8 Voting and elections	129
9 Political representation	156
10 Political parties	185
11 The separation of powers	211
12 The division of power	233
<i>Bibliography</i>	255
<i>Index</i>	264

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# Figures

3.1	The reliance predicament	<i>page</i> 37
5.1	The reliance predicament again	79
5.2	The reliance predicament with purely egoistic enforcement	80
5.3	The reliance predicament with possibly virtuous enforcement	81
6.1	The social value of virtue	94
6.2	Wage determination in sector <i>P</i>	97
8.1	Instrumental demand curves	132
8.2	Expressive equilibrium – a unimodal case	139
8.3	Expressive equilibrium – a bimodal case	141
8.4a	Expressive voting with a pivotal individual	143
8.4b	Expressive voting without a pivotal individual	144
8.5	Expressive voting in two dimensions with many voters	145
8.6	Mixed expressive and instrumental voting	152
9.1	The optimal degree of representation	160
9.2	Representation and decision rules	164
9.3	Representation and agenda setting	167
10.1	Winner takes all and winner takes most	204
11.1	Autocratic government	217
11.2	A separation of powers	220
12.1	One-dimensional division of power	238
12.2	A two-dimensional division of power	240

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0521630207 - Democratic Devices and Desires  
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[More information](#)

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## Preface and acknowledgements

This book has its origins in a number of joint papers written over an extensive period. The first of the relevant papers to appear was published in 1992, and since then there have been around eight further papers, all connected in one way or another to the questions of institutional design with which this book is also concerned. Traces of this earlier work can be found in various places in the text that follows, but the current book is much more than a refiguring of the earlier papers. Indeed, it is much *less* a refiguring than we had originally imagined it would be. Books often have a way of taking on a life of their own and this was certainly so in the present case. As we indicate in the initial chapter, the basic intention of the book changed shape as the enterprise developed. The intellectual scheme laid out originally in the paper ‘Economising on virtue’ (*Constitutional Political Economy*, 1995) took on a larger and larger place in our thinking and rendered much of our earlier treatment of topics like the separation of powers (*Journal of Theoretical Politics*, 1994) and bicameralism (*Public Choice*, 1992) seriously incomplete. Thus, what was to have been a book on ‘devices’ became much more a book on ‘desires’ and on the connection between devices and desires.

Accordingly, much of the book is entirely new material. Some chapters are reasonably close to the articles to which they most closely correspond – most notably, chapters 8 and 9 are clearly based on the 1998 paper in *Public Choice* and the 1999 paper in the *British Journal of Political Science* respectively. Otherwise, however, with due acknowledgement of Miss Manners’s sensible dictum that anything worth publishing is worth publishing twice, this book represents substantially new work.

The enterprise in its current form was started in earnest in early 1997



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when Brennan began a six-month Visiting Fellowship at All Souls College, Oxford followed by a spell as Visiting Professor in the Public Choice Center at George Mason University. Brennan expresses gratitude to both institutions for their support and more particularly for providing a congenial means to reconnect to full-time scholarship after a reasonably extended brush with the rigours of academic administration. Some of the ideas which shaped the earlier papers and which reappear in this book in modified form were originally formulated while Hamlin was a Visiting Fellow in the Research School of Social Sciences at ANU, and with the support of his ESRC Research Grant R000233782 in 1993–4. Over the period in which this book was written, Hamlin enjoyed the support of a Nuffield Foundation Social Science Fellowship, and the hospitality of Public Choice Center at George Mason University. All of this assistance is gratefully acknowledged. Our primary gratitude, however, must go to our own institutions; the Australian National University (and the Research School of Social Sciences in its Institute of Advanced Studies, more specifically) and the University of Southampton respectively. Both these institutions provide encouragement and support for scholarly activity in an age in which such encouragement and support can no longer be presumed.

In a collaboration as long-standing as this one, academics are bound to accumulate many more personal obligations. On the academic side, a very considerable number of individuals, seminar audiences, editors and referees have contributed their support, criticism and interest and it would be invidious to name only a few. But most notable among our obligations are those that are close to home – to Margaret and Jan, and Robyn and Philip and Beth – who not only had to tolerate the usual distracted husband/father, but also often enough the source of the distraction. There have been many occasions on which Alan and Geoff have spent time in one another's houses monopolising each other's attentions and sweeping aside rival, family claims. This book, such as it is, is the fruit of the families' generosity and understanding. Hence the dedication.