

DEMOCRACY; What a great idea! Part II

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In the opening segment of this essay, we talked about "Democracy", the thing itself, and about the problems inherent in both attaining to Democratic ideal forms, and the enormous difficulty involved in maintaining that status once it is attained. In fact, it is far easier to become a Democracy than to remain one.

Let me re-emphasize Socrates' dictum that "every form of Government falls from an excess of its own best principal". Democracy falls not because it gets too Democratic, but because it confuses Populism with truly representative governance, and even more deadly, it confuses egalitarianism with equality of rights.

Now, I want to talk, not about political and social theories and hypothesis, but about what is actually happening to Democratic forms all around the world.

It is certainly an interesting picture that greets us. While a fairly significant number of previously statist-totalitarian nation-states have allegedly "converted" to Democratic forms, and a number of former European Colonies in the so-called "third world" now claim to be Democracies, on closer inspection many, if not most, of the claims prove to be entirely specious.

I will not deny however, that some of these states are really trying desperately, against very great odds, to become truly Democratic, sadly far too much of it has proven to be "smoke and mirrors" rather than substantive. Unfortunately far too many of these claims to Democratic Status are simply ploys to gain grants-in-aid from the United States Government and to attract investments of private American monies. Far too much of the monies thusly attracted end up in the numbered Bank Accounts of the officialdom of the recipient nations. Far too much buys palatial mansions, private jets, Yachts, and rarifiedly expensive automobiles. This is not a good thing for the peoples of these nations. One of the most egregious exemplars is India, which of course, claims to be :the world's largest Democracy. But, what price Democracy when the people starve and lack basic medical care while the Government spends Billions on Atomic weapons

I have to regretfully say that, at least at the present time, the future of Democracy and of truly Democratic forms, looks extremely bleak. That obviously pessimistic view, I am afraid, has got to be extended world-wide .After all, if the prospect for continued Democratic Government is endangered in the United States which has long been at least partially Democratic, what are the chances in places that have never known Democracy in any form?

I think it is already clear to everyone (or rapidly becoming so) that while it is easier to become a Democracy than to remain one, it is none the less very difficult to become a true Democracy. True Democracy is extremely rare, in fact, with the exception of Iceland, I doubt it really exists anywhere on the planet today. This is not a circumstance that most people wish to believe, especially people living in nominative Democracies. It's one thing to **SAY** that your country is a Democracy, but it's another thing altogether to actually **BE** a Democracy. Far too many people in this world seem to believe that all they need do is loudly announce that "We are now a Democracy, we have elections".

Elections, however, unless they meet certain very stringent criteria, are entirely meaningless. Far too many so-called "Democracies" have only one relevant political party. Some so-called "Democracies" are actually totalitarian states. The former Yugoslavia is a perfect example of a country where mouth service is paid to "Democracy" but the substance of the government is pure fascist tyranny. For yet another instance; they recently had an "election" in Peru, that was so wildly fraudulent and corrupt that the only meaningful opposition withdrew rather than participate in such a charade. Even more important, the International Observers who were in Peru to ensure an honorable and fair election withdrew before the election because such a thing was clearly an impossibility. Alberto Fujimori was elected to an unconstitutional third term, by means of an "election" that was so utterly fraudulent as to amount to a coup d'etat! And so Peru, while claiming to be Democratic, has now an illegally elected megalomaniac in total command of the country's police and military. This man is arguably psychotic. That is a major problem with Democratic forms, they can be misused to place people who are anything but truly democratic in their policies in positions of vast power. I could make a really long list of Nation-States where much the same thing is true, but it would make this far too long an essay. But certainly the Mexican Government comes to mind, though it's problems arise primarily from institutionalized corruption.. And so we find ourselves in the position in which a great number of people are acclaiming that "Democracy" has triumphed, but what kind of Democracy is it?

We have already discussed the impediments to true Democracy of egalitarianism and demagoguery, but at this time there are really tremendous abstract influences unconsciously working to destroy Democracy in the world today.

The most insidious of these influences is success itself. Democracy; like so many other things, for reasons that are fairly easy to understand, seems to thrive when it is endangered by outside and identifiable causes. In other words, opposition strengthens Democracy. Fascism and Communism actually served Democracy well, by providing a horrible example of what else was possible.

Unfortunately, with what I am more than a little afraid is the only temporary utter destruction of Fascism based on current evidence, and the almost complete collapse of Communism, people mistakenly believed it a triumph for "Democracy"

when even their leaders were merely claiming a victory for "free market forces". The two things are entirely dichotomous.

Free Market Forces and Democracy have almost nothing in common. Democracy, ideally, is entirely driven by the welfare and well-being of the citizenry. Free-Market forces however, are entirely greed driven, their concern is with the welfare of the share holder. I think it should be perfectly obvious that unfettered greed and Democracy are mutually exclusive things.

One of the most obvious results of the "triumph of free market forces" is our "New Order" or Globalization. Globalization has one, and one only, virtue, and that virtue is a very important one. "Globalization" weakens the cohesion of Nation States, and in that way is weakening the power of Nationalism which is a totally malignant thing. However, Corporate Globalization does nothing to liberate people, or make people's lives better, safer, and healthier. It simply makes a few people unbelievably rich at the expense of everyone else. Instead of unifying the planet it is raping the planet.

The "new Order" and it's interlocking corporate oligarchy pretend to love Democracy. In a way, they do, they possess the wealth to purchase elections and ensure Governments friendly to them. Governments friendly to the Corporate Oligarchy are if nothing else, uncaring about the needs, welfare, and happiness of their citizens. Some so-called Democratic Governments of this type are as caring of their citizenry as a hog farmer is of his pigs!

It is important to realize that for the most part, or at least to a great extent, the word "Corporate Morality" are an oxymoron! One need only contemplate the tobacco industry, which has known for years that it was killing people, kept the knowledge secret, and didn't give a thought for how many lives they ruined as long as they made their profits. The corporate structure of the Tobacco Industry and all those connected with it are every bit as culpable, as the so-called "Drug Lords" if not more so. And these are the people who are participating in the control of civilization by way of Corporate Globalization!

All this has been made possible, in fact easy, by the "triumph of Free Market Capitalism" but where is humanity's triumph? No where, that's where! The goal of human existence should be to make the world a better, kinder, more compassionate, supportive place for everyone who lives. The agenda of human civilization should be toward that goal and only toward that goal. To the extent that this is not true, humanity is wasting its time!

We have now discussed how the appearance of complete success has weakened if not demolished Democracy. What else is contributing to the problem?

There are, as I said earlier, many nation states that are trying desperately to become Democracies. They are not really succeeding, at least not quickly enough to satisfy their citizens. This causes a sense of discouragement among

the voters and slowly but surely the impetus to form a democratic state dissipates. This of course is not a good thing for the society on this planet. But why are these people, as anxious as they are to reach democratic status not succeeding? It is because they are attempting to do something of which they have no experience whatsoever.

For instance, the Russian people are truly desirous of becoming the citizens of a Democratic State, but they have absolutely no experience of Democracy. Nor have they had any chance at all to have had any such experience. As a result, they are basing their ideas of Democracy on their very hazy ideas of American Democracy. But these ideas are only perceived "as through a glass, darkly" and of course, America's claim to Democracy is "iffy" at best. What we have now is the Russian people, who have always been told exactly what to do, and how to do it, are suddenly expected to be the decision makers. But they have absolutely no experience at making decisions!

Another factor is this, the Russian People, in common with all other people who have no experience of self-government, and no experience of decision making other than limited personal choice, have naturally come to despise and detest all government, and to resist government in any way they can. The rulers of Russia have long bitterly complained about the apathetic and supine nature of the Russian People, but what other course had these people to take? The habit of apathy is one of the most difficult to change. People who have, for centuries, had no opportunity to make any kind of decisions regarding the course their country will take, lose the ability to do so. They have been told what to do, and how to do it, (and usually largely ignored both directions) for so long that their only answer to any Government directive is evasion.

Now, while Russia is the most spectacular example at the present time, there are so very many third world countries that are also experiencing what appear to be insurmountable difficulties in reaching the democratic state. Most of these countries have only emerged from colonial status since 1945 and also have no experience of self-direction. In these cases too, there is the additional impediment that for so long the Colonial powers had treated the citizens of these places not as merely "subjects", but as total inferiors. A perfect case-in-point is Indonesia. The Dutch, who are perfectly lovely people at home in Holland, for some reason I have never comprehended, chose to be really terrible Colonial Masters, their record, I believe is only exceeded by Belgium's record in the Congo. When the various Colonial Powers were forced to release their colonies at the end of World War II, the citizens of these many states were literally cast adrift. They were at the mercy of the former "Civil Servants of the Colonial Regime, many (probably most) of whom were corrupt to the core and also men who had absolutely no respect for, or desire for, Democratic Government, but who realized that the illusion of Democratic forms would make life easier for them. However, as we all know, many of them survived by playing America and Russia off against one another by becoming, or threatening to become

Communists. But this too was all smoke and mirrors and no substance as the Russians found out to their discomfort.

As I said in the first essay in this series, the successful attainment of Democracy requires that certain parameters of shared experience be met. In failing this requirement, the nations attempting to become Democracies are failing to do so, and in the process, giving Democracy per se, a bad repute.

Democracy cannot be attained by those who have absolutely no experience of it. This is one instance in which Socrates' dictum doesn't work. Democracy cannot fail from an excess of democracy if it hasn't yet been attained.

There is this though, if these peoples don't become too discouraged, and too cynical about Democracy, and keep on trying to achieve, there is a remote possibility that through trial and error eventually they will garner enough experience at Democracy to actually "give it a go".

Probably one of the greatest stumbling blocks placed in the path leading to real democracy is Religion.

The three principal religions on this planet, by which I mean the three most powerful religions, are all "revealed religions". "Revealed Religions" and Democracy are entirely dichotomous! Christianity, Judaism, and Islam are all totally hierarchical in nature, though the forms that they take differ in style, they are nonetheless entirely authoritarian.

There was a time in the not too distant past when American fundamentalist Christians did not vote in elections because were they to choose the losing side, they would, they believed, be "going contrary to the will of God". This was a pretty good thing as it kept these people out of the political life of the country. But today they have changed their tune and are perfectly willing to rig elections all on God's behalf of course.

In any true Democracy, all religion must be kept rigidly separated from Government. Now this means that as religion must not be permitted to interfere in Governmental acts, so too Government must not be permitted to interfere in any way with the free expression of religion as long as that expression isn't illegal and as long as the expression of one's religion doesn't interfere in any way with any other person's expression of their beliefs.

In every instance in which religion and government is in some way connected and interdependent Democracy is impossible to attain or maintain. That means that Israel is clearly not the Democracy it claims to be, it is a Theocracy in which most of the people of Israel are effectively impotent in the face of the Board of Orthodox Rabbis who have veto power over most acts of the Government. Not is any other theocracy, especially in the Islamic countries, a valid Democracy.

World War One, it is said, made the world "safe for Democracy". It did no such thing, the world will be "safe for Democracy" when both Nationalism and Religion

are totally divorced from any connection with Government. Everyone is entitled to believe in any form of the greater reality outside of physical reality they choose, but they are not at all entitled to impose their beliefs or any aspects of those beliefs on others. There is also clearly a difference between Ethnic pride and malignant nationalism. Any person has a right to be proud of the achievements of his or her ancestors and people, but they are anything but entitled to make that pride an instrument of oppression or repression of others who do not share the same past.

Unless and until all people come to these realizations there will be no peace in the world and very little real progress other than technical. Unless and until all people come to this realization technical progress will only make things worse as religion biased and nationalistic governments utilize technical progress to control people more efficiently.