

## John Dewey

### Etika demokrasi

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..... Democracy, like any other polity, has been finely termed the memory of a historic past, the consciousness of a living present, the ideal of the coming future. Democracy, in a word, is a social, that is to say, an ethical conception, and upon its ethical significance is based its significance as governmental. Democracy is a form of government only because it is a form of moral and spiritual association. But so in aristocracy. What is the difference? What distinguishes the ethical basis and ideal of one from that of the other? It may appear a roundabout way to reach a simple end, to refer to Plato and to Greek life to get data for an answer; but I know of no way in which I can so easily bring out what seems to me the truth. The Platonic Republic is a splendid and imperishable formulation of the aristocratic ideal. If it had no value for philosophical reasons, if its theory of morals, of reality and of knowledge had disappeared as utterly as the breezes which swept the grasses under the plane tree by which Plato and his disciples sat and talked, the Republic would be immortal as the summary of all that was best and most permanent in Greek life, of its ways of thinking and feeling, and of its ideals. But the Republic is more it seizes upon the heart of the ethical problem, the relation of the individual to the universal, and states a solu-

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tion. The question of the Republic is as to the ideal of men's conduct; the answer is such a development of man's nature as brings him into complete harmony with the universe of spiritual relations, or, in Platonic language, the state. This universe, in turn, is man writ large; it is the manifestation, the realization of the capacities of the individual. Such a development of the individual that he shall be in harmony with all others in the state, that is, that he shall possess as his own the unified will of the community; that is the end both of politics and of ethics. Nothing could be more aside from the mark than to say that the Platonic ideal subordinates and sacrifices the individual to the state. It does, indeed, hold that the individual can be what he ought to be, can become what, in idea, he is, only as a member of a spiritual organism, called by Plato the state, and, in losing his own individual will, acquiring that of this larger reality. But this is not loss of selfhood or personality, it is its realization. The individual is not sacrificed; he is brought to reality in the state. We certainly can not find here any ground upon which to distinguish the aristocratic from the democratic ideal. But we have not asked

how this unity of the individual and the universe, this perfect man in the perfect state, is to be brought about. Here lies the distinction sought for; it is not a question of end, but of means. According to Plato (and the aristocratic idea everywhere), the multitude is incapable of forming such an ideal and of attempting to reach it. Plato is the true author of the doctrine of the "remnant." There is, in his words, "no chance of perfection either in states or in individuals until a necessity is laid upon the small class of cadging for the state." It is to the one wise man, or to the

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few, that Plato looks for redemption. Once found these are to be given absolute control, and are to see to it that each individual is placed in such a position in the state that he may make perfect harmony with the others, and at the same time perform that for which he is best fitted, and thus realize the goal of life—"Justice," in Plato's word. Such is the barest outline of the most perfect picture of the aristocratic ideal which history affords. The few best, the aristoi; these know and are fitted for rule; but they are to rule not in their own interests but in that of society as a whole, and, therefore, in that of every individual in society. They do not bear rule over the others; they show them what they can best do, and guide them in doing it. There is no need to dwell upon the charm, upon the attractiveness of the aristocratic ideal. The best witness to it is in the long line of great men who have reiterated with increasing emphasis that all will go wrong, until the few who know and are strong, are put in power, while others, foregoing the assertion of their individuality, submit to superior wisdom and goodness. But history has been making the other way. If history be, as Strauss said, a sound aristocrat, then history is committing suicide. It is working toward something which is not history. The aristocratic ideal, spite of all its attractions, is not equal to reality; it is not equal to the actual forces animating men as they work in history. It has failed because it is found that the practical consequence of giving the few wise and good power is that they cease to remain wise and good. They become ignorant of the needs and requirement of the many; they leave the many outside the pale with no real share in the commonwealth. Perchance they even wilfully use their wisdom and strength for themselves, for the assertion of privilege and

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status and to the detriment of the common good. The aristocratic society always limits the range of men who are regarded as participating in the state, in the unity of purpose and destiny; and it always neglects to see that those theoretically included really obtain their well being. Every forward democratic movement is followed by the broadening of the circle of the state, and by more effective oversight that every citizen may be insured the rights belonging to him. But even were it possible to find men so wise as not to ignore the misery and degradation beyond their immediate ken, men so

good as to use their power only for the community, there is another fact which is the condemnation of the aristocratic theory. The ethical ideal is not satisfied merely when all men sound the note of harmony with the highest social good, so be it that they have not worked it out for themselves. Were it granted that • the rule of the aristoi would lead to the highest external development of society and the individual, there would still be a fatal objection. Humanity cannot be content with a good which is procured from without, however high and otherwise complete that good. The aristocratic idea implies that the mass of men are to be inserted by wisdom, or, if necessary, thrust by force, into their proper positions in the social organism. It is true, indeed, that when an individual has found that place in society for which he is best fitted and is exercising the function proper to that place, he has obtained his completest development, but it is also true (and this is the truth omitted by aristocracy, emphasized by democracy) that he must find this place and assume this work in the main for himself. Democracy does not differ from aristocracy in its goal. The end is not mere assertion of the individual will as in-

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individual; it is not disregard of law, of the universal; it is complete realization of the law, namely of the unified spirit of the community. Democracy differs as to its means. This universal, this law, this unity of purpose, this fulfilling of function in devotion to the interests of the social organism, is not to be put into a man from without. It must begin in the man himself, however much the good and the wise of society contribute. Personal responsibility, individual initiation, these are the notes of democracy. Aristocracy and democracy both imply that the actual state of society exists for the sake of realizing an end which is ethical, but aristocracy implies that this is to be done primarily by means of special institutions or organizations within society, while democracy holds that the ideal is already at work in every personality, and must be trusted to care for itself. There is an individualism in democracy which there is not in aristocracy; but it is an ethical, not a numerical individualism; it is an individualism of freedom, of responsibility, of initiative to and for the ethical ideal, not an individualism of lawlessness. In one word, democracy means that personality is the first and final reality. It admits that the full significance of personality can be learned by the individual only as it is already presented to him in objective form in society; it admits that the chief stimuli and encouragements to the realization of personality come from society; but it holds, none the less, to the fact that personality cannot be procured for any one, however degraded and feeble, by any one else, however wise and strong. It holds that the spirit of personality indwells in every individual and that the choice to develop it must proceed from that individual. From this central position of personality result \_ the other notes of democracy, liberty, equality, fraternity,

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-words which are not mere words to catch the mob, but symbols of the highest ethical idea which humanity has / yet reached-the idea that personality is the one thing of permanent and abiding worth, and that in every human individual there lies personality. - By way of illustration (and what is said in the remainder of this paper is only by way of illustration), let us take the notion of liberty. Plato gives a vivid illustration of what he means by democratic freedom. It is doing as one likes. It is ordering life as one pleases. It is thinking and acting as one has a mind to. Liberty in a democracy can have no limit. Its result is loss of reverence and of order. It is the denial of moderation, of the principle of limit. Democratic liberty is the following out of individual wills, of particular desires, to the utmost degree. It has no order or law (Rep. viii, 557-563 ). In a word, it is the extreme assertion of individualism, resulting in anarchy. In this conception of liberty he has been followed by'au of the anti-democratic school. But from the democratic standpoint, it must be remembered that the individual is something more than the individual, namely, a personality. His freedom is not mere self-assertion, nor unregulated desire. You cannot say that he knows no law; you must say that he knows no law but his own, the law of personality; no law, in other words, externally imposed, however splendid the authority, and undoubted the goodness of those that impose it. Law is the objective expression of personality. It is not a limitation upon individual freedom; it is correlative with it. Liberty is not a numerical notion of isolation; it is the ethical idea that personality is the supreme and only law, that every man is an absolute end in himself. The democratic ideal includes liberty, because democracy without

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initiation from within, without an ideal chosen from within / and freely followed from within, is nothing. 1 Again, for illustration, take the notion of equality. If we heed the aristocratic school, we learn that equality means numerical equality, that one number one is just as good as any other number one. Conceiving it to refer to bald individuality, they think its inevitable outcome, logical if not historical, is an equal division of all things from virtue to wealth. Democracy is condemned because it regards as equal the worst and the best of men, the wisest and the most ignorant. It is condemned because it is said to aim at an equal distribution of wealth and of the happiness that grows from material possessions and surroundings. It is said that it is both foolish and wicked to attempt by the lie of equality to blind one's eyes to the differences of men in wisdom, virtue and industry; that upon these differences, indeed, rests the whole structure of society with its necessary grades of subordination and service; and that the only society which' is either stable or progressive is one in which the motives of inequality, both political and industrial, have fair play. As Maine says, the motives

which have always impelled mankind to the production of increasing industrial resources are such as infallibly entail inequality in its distribution. It is the never-ending struggle for existence, the private war which makes one man strive to climb upon the shoulders of another and stay there, which have been the springs to action. Take them away, introduce equality, and you have no motive to progress. What shall we say to this indictment? Simply that it is beside the mark. As relates to democracy, it corresponds to no reality. Equality is not an arithmetical, but) an ethical conception. Personality is as universal as hu-

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manity; it is indifferent to all distinctions which divide men from men. Wherever you have a man, there you have personality, and there is no trace by which one personality may be distinguished from another so as to be set above or below. It means that in every individual there lives an infinite and universal possibility; that of being a king and priest. Aristocracy is blasphemy against personality. It is the doctrine of the elect few applied not to some life in the future, but to all relations of humanity. Hero-worship means man despised. The true meaning of equality is synonymous with the definition of democracy given by James Russell Lowell. It is the form of society in which every man has a chance and knows that he has it-and we may add, a chance to which no possible limits can be put, a chance which is truly infinite, the chance to become a person. Equality, in short, is the ideal of humanity; an ideal in the consciousness of which democracy lives and moves. One aspect of the indictment remains to be touched-the nature of industrial equality, or the supposed tendency of democracy towards socialism, if not communism. And there is no need to beat about the bush in saying that democracy is not in reality what it is in name until it is \ industrial, as well as civil and political. Such a condition is indeed far enough away; on this point, democracy is an ideal of the future, not a starting point. In this respect, society is still a sound aristocrat. And the reflex influence of this upon our civil and political organization is such that they are only imperfectly democratic. For their sakes, therefore, as well as for that of industrial relations, a democracy of wealth is a necessity. All that makes such assertions seem objectionable is · that this democracy of wealth is represented, often by its

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adherents, always by its opponents, as if it meant the numerical division into equal portions of all wealth, and its numerical redistribution. But all that has been said in this paper has been said in vain, unless it be now recognized that democracy is anything but a numerical notion; and that the numerical application of it is as much out of place here as it is everywhere else. What is meant in detail by a democracy of wealth we shall not know until it is more of a reality than it is now. In general, however, it means and must mean that all industrial \relations are to be regarded as subordinate to human

relations, to the law of personality. Numerical identity is not required, it is not even allowed; but it is absolutely required that industrial organization shall be made a social function. And if this expression again seems objectionable, it is because it is interpreted to mean that in some way society, as a whole, to the abolition of all individual initiative and result, is to take charge of all those undertakings which we call economic. It seems to imply socialism in the sense in which that mode of life destroys that individual responsibility and activity which are at the very heart of modern life. But when we are told that the family is a social institution, and that life in the family is a social function, do we understand this to mean that it is a form of existence in which all individuality is renounced, and an artificial entity created which absorbs the rightful activities of the individual? I think not; we mean that the family is an ethical community, and that life in the family conforms to its idea only when the individual realizes oneness of interest and purpose with it. And this, in kind, is precisely what is meant when we speak of industrial relations as being necessarily social;

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we mean that they are to become the material of an ethical realization; the form and substance of a community of good (though not necessarily of goods) wider than any now known: that as the family, largely in its best examples, the state somewhat, though in a less degree, mean unity of purpose and interest, so economic society must mean unity of interest and purpose. The truth is that in these matters we are still largely in the intellectual bounds which bound pre-Christian thought. We still think of life as having two parts, one animal, the other truly human and therefore truly ethical. The getting and distributing of the material benefits of life are regarded as indeed a means to the possibility of the higher life, the life of men in their distinctively human relations, but as in themselves wholly outside of that life. Both Plato and Aristotle, for example, always take it as a matter of course, that everything which is industrial, which concerns the getting or distributing of wealth, lies wholly outside, nay, is opposed to the life of the citizen, that is, of the member of an ethical community. Plato's attacks upon the sophists for receiving money for teaching were on the ground that they thus degraded a personal (that is, a moral) relation, that of teacher and pupil, to an industrial; as if the two were necessarily hostile. Aristotle denies that an artisan can have virtue, i. e., the qualities pertaining to the fulfillment of social functions. Mechanics are, indeed, indispensable to the state, "but not all who are indispensable to the state are citizens." (And we must remember that the terms 'citizen' and 'state' have, in Aristotle, always an ethical bearing.) It was necessary that there should be some who should give themselves to that which is purely material, the industrial, in order that others might have the leisure to give themselves to the social and political. the ethical.

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We have, nominally, at least, given up the idea that a certain body of men are to be set aside for the doing of this necessary work; but we still think of this work, and of the relations pertaining to it, as if they were outside of the ethical realm and wholly in the natural. We admit, nay, at times we claim, that ethical rules are to be applied to this industrial sphere, but we think of it as an external application. That the economic and industrial life is in itself ethical, that it is to be made contributory to the realization of personality through the formation of a higher and more complete unity among men, this is what we do not recognize; but such is the meaning of the statement that democracy must become industrial. I have used these illustrations simply for the sake of showing what I understand the conception of democracy to mean, and to show that the ordinary objections to democracy rest upon ideas which conceive of it after the type of an individualism of a numerical character; and have tried to suggest that democracy is an ethical idea, the idea of a personality, with truly infinite capacities, incorporate with every man. Democracy and the one, the ultimate, ethical ideal of humanity are to my mind synonyms. The , idea of democracy, the ideas of liberty, equality and : fraternity, represent a society in which the distinction between the spiritual and the secular has ceased, and as in

1 Greek theory, as in the Christian theory of the Kingdom of God, the church and the state, the divine and the human Organization of society are one. But this, you will say, is idealism. In reply, I can but quote James Russell Lowell once more and say that "it is indeed idealism, but that I am one of those who believe that the real will never find an irremovable basis till it rests upon the ideal;" and add that the best test of any form of society is the ideal which it proposes for the forms of its life, and the degree in which it realizes this ideal.