

The Future of Democracy

--Dr. Hallograph

Most of us Americans agree that our country is a “democracy.” After all, we fought World War I to “make the world safe for democracy.” We fought World War II for the same reason. We’re now fighting in the Middle East to extend the blessings of democracy to that region. But ... is the United States really a “democracy”?

A few years back, President Clinton called the United States “the world’s oldest democracy.” A leader of China replied to this remark by saying that the belief the United States is a democracy is “a two hundred-year-old fairy tale.” Who’s right?—Bill or the China leader?

Before I answer this question, I need to say something about democracy, something very important: *Democracy doesn’t exist*. Let me explain.... Defined literally, democracy means “rule by the lower classes.” Can you name one country, past or present, that is or was ruled by the lower classes? I bet you can’t. “Well, what about the United States?” you ask. Let me ask you: “How many members of the United States Congress are lower class?”

“If democracy doesn’t exist,” you ask, “how come it’s a word?” Good question. The word *democracy* originated as a term to represent a system that is the polar opposite of aristocracy. The historical record shows that a great many aristocracies existed—and exist today. Democracy, however, never made it out of the hypothetical realm.

Now, allow me to complicate the picture a bit.... Although there’s no such thing as a democracy, there is a long tradition of political theory and policy describable as *democratic*. The tradition began with the ancient Greek archon (dictator) Solon, who was called upon by the (aristocratic) leaders of the city-state of Athens to find a solution to a little problem they faced—imminent revolution. It seems that the aristocrats had acquired better than ninety-nine percent of the wealth of state, and the general population was not at all happy about that.

Solon succeeded in handling the problem, so much so that the system he created is remembered still, as “Solon’s republic.” What did he do? One, he

abolished all debts. This was called “the Shaking Off.” Two, he replaced the incredibly harsh Code of Draco, which was applied inequitably, with the humane Code of Solon, which applied equally to all citizens, aristocrats as well as the common people. Three, he took away ultimate political power from the aristocrats and gave it a “People’s Council,” which represented the non-aristocrats. Members of the Council were chosen by lot, i.e., names out of a hat. (No expensive campaigns that only the rich can afford!)

The reforms of Solon had a very interesting result: Conflicts between the few and the many were healed, and Athens prospered, becoming the major power of the time.

The republic of Solon existed for only about ten years. After everything was running smoothly again, the aristocrats seized control of government, and the golden republic began to fall apart. Nevertheless, Solon’s reforms were not forgotten. (Great success stories never are.) The principles behind those reforms became the principles on which the tradition of “democracy” (i.e., democratic republicanism) was based: Fair (non-usurious) economics; one law for all; and fair representation of all citizens in the government.

So ... who was right? Bill?—or the China leader? The China leader was right, as “democracy” doesn’t really exist. But Bill Clinton was also right, as the United States was for a long time the shining example of a democratic republic.

What will be the future of democracy? One day in the not distant future, the old political polarity of the few vs. the many will collapse—as a result of the general acceptance of a new foundational paradigm called “scientific holism.” When this occurs, all the terms describing rule by the few will fall into disuse, as well as the terms describing rule by the many. They will be replaced by one term, a term that expresses the understanding that all people are members of *one* family. That term is *holocracy*.

