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Democracy: a False and Vicious Idea

by Hans-Hermann Hoppe

Imagine a world government, democratically elected according to the principle of one-man-one-vote. What would be the probable outcome of an election? We would get a Chinese-Indian coalition government. And what would this government most likely decide to do to satisfy its supporters and be re-elected? It would probably find that the Western world had far too much wealth and the rest of the world, in particular China and India, had far too little, and hence, it would enact a systematic wealth and income redistribution from the rich West to the poor East.

Or imagine, just in the United States, that the right to vote were extended to seven-year-olds. While the government would probably not be made up of children, its policies most likely would reflect the "legitimate concerns" of children to have "adequate" and "equal" access to "free" hamburgers, lemonade, and videos.

These thought experiments illustrate the consequences which have resulted from the process of democratization, which began in Europe and the U.S. in the second half of the 19th century and has come to fruition since the end of World War I. The successive expansion of the franchise and finally the establishment of universal adult suffrage did within each country what a world

democracy would do for the entire globe: it set in motion a seemingly permanent tendency toward wealth and income redistribution.

One-man-one-vote combined with "free entry" into government, i.e., democracy, implies that every person and his personal property is up for grabs by everyone else. By seemingly opening the corridors of political power to everyone, democracy creates a "tragedy of the commons" for political power, wherein no one wishes it to be restricted since he, or those favorable to him, may someday get a chance to wield it. In contrast, in the "absolute" monarchies of the West, those not in the ruling class had little or no chance of entering it, and thus, they stridently opposed any advance of the monarch's power.

In democracies, however, it can be expected that majorities of "have-nots" will relentlessly try to enrich themselves at the expense of minorities of "haves." This is not to say that there will be only one class of "have-nots" and one class of "haves," and that the redistribution will be uniformly from the rich to the poor. To the contrary, while the redistribution from rich to poor will always play a prominent role everywhere, it would be a sociological blunder to assume that it will be the sole or even the prominent form of redistribution. After all, the "permanently" rich and the "permanently" poor are usually rich or poor for a reason.

The rich are characteristically bright and industrious, and the poor typically dull, lazy, or both. It is not very likely that dullards, even if they make up a majority, will systematically outsmart and enrich them-

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P.C. Watch

Return?

Government is neglecting its duty of "external defense," writes Paul Johnson in the London (i.e., real) *Spectator*, by "failing to control immigration. A nation's integrity can be destroyed not just by invasion but by demographic penetration on a large scale—that is precisely what finished the Roman Empire in the West."

"Race riots are now common in Britain" and "they will occur whenever black racist leaders want them to occur." Some immigration to Britain has been successful, but "as in the United States," Afro-Caribbean has not. "The evidence summarized in Charles Murray's *The Bell Curve* suggests why."

In Britain and the U.S., affirmative action has only made things worse "by undermining the principle of equality before the law. Worse, the official practice of positive discrimination in favor of non-whites has legitimized the emer-

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gence of black racism, which is now a formidable presence in our midst."

"Black racists can never be happy in Britain. I have already suggested a scheme whereby people from Hong Kong should be allowed to purchase full citizenship here, the money being used to finance the repatriation of unhappy blacks to the Caribbean or Africa." And, indeed, the "logical end of black racism is back to Africa."

Such a repatriation program would be very expensive. But so is "the cost of underwriting the existing mess, especially now that black racists have taken to burning down and looting their neighborhoods whenever they feel like it."

Religious Freedom

A Southeast Asian witch doctor who clubbed a three-month old German Shepherd puppy to death is up on animal cruelty charges in Fresno, Cal. (*Arizona Republic*, 12/19/95).

Chia Thai Moua, a Hmong tribesman, says the charges violate his religious liberty, and that he only resorted to killing the dog when other religious ceremonies, including burning money and sacrificing a chicken, failed to cure his wife.

"We love dogs," said Shur Vangyi, deputy city manager of Fresno for Southeast Asian affairs. "They are a very dear pet to us too. But "sometimes we have to kill dogs to cure our souls."

Initiation

A woman and her slightly built 15-year-old son were walking near the shopping mall in Albany, Georgia, in early January when a muscular black boy assaulted the white boy with brass knuckles, beating him senseless as the frantic mother screamed. Only the presence of a policeman nearby saved

the white boy's life, although he is in intensive care with serious head and other injuries.

Why the attack? One of the local black gangs has as its initiation rite, the beating to death of a white boy. You will not read about this in the *New York Times*, although you can imagine the reaction if some white gang's initiation involved killing blacks. After all, the alleged rude remark of a white high school principal in Wedowee, Ala., was international news for months.

Hold It, Hold It

"If the author of 'Waiting To Exhale' had been a Caucasian," writes Selimah Nemoy to the *New York Times* (1/8/96), we'd be seeing a protest greater than 'The Last Temptation of Christ.'

"I am dumbfounded as to how, according to 'For Black Women, a Movie Stirs Breathless Excitement' (front page, Dec. 31), so many African-American women think this is a positive (let alone accurate) portrayal of ourselves.

"The women in the movie based on Terry McMillan's novel, though educated and beautiful, are portrayed as clueless harlots whose worlds revolve negatively (and unrealistically) around

men. African-American men are portrayed as selfish, stupid louts interested only in themselves and chasing white women."

Crime of the Century

San Francisco police are asking for help in solving a crime wave, in which at least two men had a burning chemical poured on their genitals in a porno shop. There may be "other victims out there who would like to come forward," said Inspector Ken King.

"The store at Geary and Polk

streets offers private viewing booths where men watch a short pornographic movie for a quarter. Small holes have been drilled between the booths to allow customers to engage in sex acts with neighboring patrons."

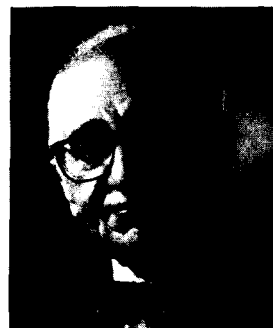
"Sometimes it's prearranged, sometimes it's not," said King. "They stick their dinky through the hole expecting wonderful things to happen." Instead, "the victims felt a painful burning sensation caused by a caustic chemical. Their sex lives will be impaired for weeks to come," said King. "It's an alternative lifestyle, and there's nothing wrong with that," said King. (*San Francisco Examiner*, 12/22/95)

Barbie P.C.

The Mattel toy company was criticized last year for making "only" 10% of its holiday Barbie dolls black, and 90% white. So this year, it raised the black figure to 40%. The result was a shortage of white Barbies, and an excess of black ones. Who's to blame? A racist company and society, of course. (*San Francisco Examiner*, 12/18/95)

"I'm No Longer Donald"

"Donald McCloskey is now officially Deirdre McCloskey," reports Charles Bullard in the *Des Moines Sunday Register* (11/26/95).



Dean of the Austrian School of economics, founder of modern libertarianism, and restorer of the Old Right, Murray N. Rothbard (1926-1995) was a one-man army of liberty. The *RRR* is inspired by his spirit, and dedicated to his vision.

McCloskey, an economist famous for his hatred of Murray N. Rothbard, "disclosed plans earlier this month to undergo a sex change operation and become a woman." He also divorced the "mother of the couple's two grown children."

"McCloskey considered himself a heterosexual cross-dresser until Aug. 20. Then 'I realized I'm a woman with this extremely inconvenient history and plumbing. I started to cry because it was so powerful, so overwhelming to realize. I thought I was a guy in a dress for a long time.'"

The professor "plans to have cosmetic surgery on her face next month in San Francisco in an effort to look more feminine. McCloskey, who is six feet tall, also had her ears pierced and underwent 120 hours of painful electrolysis to eliminate the beard that Donald wore for many years."

"All of this is not about...being glamorous,' the professor warned. 'It's about not causing a commotion on the street. It's about being able to go to the bathroom without being hassled.' When she wears one of her size 12 dresses and puts on her wig, makeup, jewelry, hose, high heels, and prosthetic breasts, McCloskey says about half the people she passes on the street accept her as a woman."■

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selves at the expense of a minority of bright and energetic individuals. Rather, most redistribution will take place *within* the group of the "non-poor," and frequently it will actually be the better-off who succeed in having themselves subsidized by the worse-off. Just think of the almost universal practice of offering a "free" university education, whereby the working-class, whose children rarely attend universities, is made to pay for the education of middle-class children.

Moreover, it can be expected that

there will be many competing groups and coalitions trying to gain at the expense of others. There will be various changing criteria defining what it is that makes one person a "have" (deserving to be looted) and another a "have-not" (deserving to loot). At the same time, individuals will be members of a multitude of groups of "haves" and "have-nots," losing on account of one of their characteristics and gaining on account of another, with some individuals ending up net-losers and others net-winners of redistribution.

The recognition of democracy as a machinery of popular wealth and income redistribution in conjunction with one of the most fundamental principles in economics—that one will end up getting more of whatever is being subsidized—provides the key to understanding the present age.

All redistribution, regardless of the criterion on which it is based, involves taking from the original owners and producers (the "havers" of something) and giving to non-owners and non-producers (the "non-havers" of something). The incentive to be an original owner or producer of the thing in question is reduced, and the incentive to be a non-owner and non-producer is raised.

Accordingly, as a result of subsidizing individuals because they are poor, there will be more poverty. In subsidizing people because they are unemployed, more unemployment will be created. Supporting single mothers out of tax funds will lead to an increase in single motherhood, illegitimacy, and divorce.

In some cases, these policies can work at cross purposes. In outlawing child labor, income is transferred from families with children

to the childless (as a result of the legal restriction on the supply of labor, wage rates will rise). Accordingly, the birthrate will fall. On the other hand, by subsidizing the education of children, income is transferred from the childless and those with few children to those with many children. As a result the birthrate will increase. Yet because of the so-called Social Security System,

the value of children will again fall, and birthrates will decline; for in subsidizing retirees out of taxes imposed on current income earners, the institution of the family—the intergenerational bond between parents, grandparents, and children—is systematically weakened.

The old need no longer rely on the assistance of their children if they have made no provision for their old age and the young (with typically

less accumulated wealth) must support the old (with typically more accumulated wealth) rather than the other way around, as is normal within families. Parents' desire for children and children's desire for parents will decline, family breakups and dysfunctional families will increase, and saving and capital formation will fall while consumption rises.

In subsidizing the malingerers, the neurotics, the careless, the alcoholics, the drug addicts, the AIDS-infected, and the physically and mentally "challenged" through insurance regulation, there will be more illness, malingering, neuroticism, carelessness, alcoholism, drug addiction, AIDS infection, and physical and mental retardation.

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(rather than making criminals compensate their victims and pay the full cost of their own apprehension and incarceration), crime will increase.

By forcing businessmen, through “affirmative action” and “non-discrimination” programs, to employ more women, homosexuals, blacks, or other “minorities” than they would like to, there will be more employed minorities, fewer employers and fewer male, heterosexual, and white employment.

By compelling private land owners to protect, i.e., subsidize, “endangered species” residing on their land through environmental legislation, there will be more and better-off animals, and fewer and worse-off humans.

Most importantly, by compelling private property owners and market income earners, i.e., producers, to subsidize politicians, political parties, and civil servants (politicians and government employees cannot pay taxes but *must be paid* out of taxes), there will be less wealth formation, fewer producers and less productivity, and ever more waste, parasites, and parasitism.

After less than a hundred years of democracy and redistribution, the predictable results are in. The “reserve fund” of wealth and capital inherited from past centuries of productive activity under a relatively free market is nearly exhausted. For several decades, since the late 1960s or early 1970s, real standards of living have stagnated or even fallen in the West. The public debt and the cost of the existing social security and health care systems have brought on the prospect of an imminent economic collapse. At the same time, almost every form of undesirable behavior—unemployment, welfare dependency, negligence, recklessness, incivility, psychopathy, hedonism,

and crime—has increased, and social conflict and societal breakdown have risen to dangerous heights. If current trends continue, it is safe to say that the Western welfare state, i.e., social democracy, will collapse just as Eastern, i.e., Russian-style socialism, collapsed in the late 1980s.

Unfortunately, economic collapse does not automatically lead to improvement. Matters can become worse rather than better. What is necessary once a crisis arrives are ideas—and men capable of understanding and implementing them when the opportunity arises. Ultimately, the course of history is determined by ideas, be they true or false, and by men inspired to act upon them.

The current mess is also the result of ideas. It is the result of the overwhelming acceptance, by public opinion, of the idea of democracy. As long as this acceptance prevails, a catastrophe will be unavoidable, and there will be no hope for improvement even after its arrival. On the other hand, once the idea of democ-

cracy is recognized as false and vicious—and ideas can, in principle, be changed almost instantaneously—a catastrophe can be avoided.

The central task ahead for those wanting to turn the tide and prevent an outright breakdown of civilization is the de-legitimation of the idea of democracy, i.e., to demonstrate democracy as the root cause of the present state of progressive de-civilization. To this purpose, one should first point out that it is difficult to find many proponents of democracy in the history of political theory. Almost all major thinkers had nothing but contempt for democracy. Even the Founding Fathers, nowadays, mistakenly, con-

sidered defenders of democracy, were strictly opposed to it. Without a single exception, they agreed with Aristotle that democracy is nothing but mob-rule. They preferred Thomas Jefferson’s theory of “natural aristocracy” of which they considered themselves members and accordingly they advocated an aristocratic republic.

Even among the few theoretical defenders of democracy in the history of political thought, such as Rousseau, it is almost impossible to find anyone advocating democracy for anything but extremely small communities. Indeed, in villages or towns, where everyone knows everyone else personally, most people cannot but acknowledge that the position of the “haves” is typically based on their superior personal achievement just as the position of the “have-nots” finds its typical explanation in their personal deficiencies and inferiority. Under these circumstances, it is far more difficult to get away with trying to loot other people and their personal property to one’s advantage. In distinct contrast, in large territories encompassing millions or even hundreds of millions of people, where the potential looters do not know their victims, and vice versa, the human desire to enrich oneself at another’s expense is subject to little or no restraint.

More importantly, it must be made clear again that the idea of democracy is immoral as well as uneconomical. As for the moral status of majority rule, it must be pointed out that it allows for A and B to band together to loot C, C and A in turn joining to loot B, and then B and C conspiring against A, etc. This is not justice but a moral outrage, and rather than treating democracy and democrats with respect, they should be treated with open contempt and ridiculed as moral frauds.

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Kristol's Christmas Present

by Llewellyn H. Rockwell, Jr.

Christmas has become our most contentious holiday, partly because it's so public, with trees, carols, movies, etc. As for Christians who want to celebrate this season the way their parents did, they are yearly reminded of how culturally marginal their faith has become.

The media treat people who celebrate Christmas as a tiny minority, like Buddhists. They used to say: Put Christ back in Christmas. Now they would have to say, put Christmas back into the Holiday Season. And when the dread word Christmas is used, it is always in conjunction with Kwanza or the Winter Solstice.

In large cities, we can't say "Merry Christmas" without seeming to make a political statement. Ah, the holiday spirit. It's become the season to offend Christians, to drum them out of public life, and to see how far they can be pushed before they explode. Last year, it was the season for *Time* to tell us that Jesus Christ was a humanitarian but nothing more.

This year, the *New York Times* treated us to a special "holiday" issue of its Sunday Magazine featuring an article on the birth of Jesus, and all the events that surrounded it. It's a great story, the article said, but a fake one, of course.

Wasn't the *Wall Street Journal* an exception? Didn't it run a pro-Christian right article on the op-ed page by Irving Kristol? It's true he extolled the legitimacy of the Christian right (courts have unfairly attacked public religious displays, etc.). But you had to make it to the

end of the piece before you got to the real point.

As an aside, notice that the neoconservatives reject the phrase "Christian right" in favor of "conservative Christian." Paleos, on the other hand, understand that there is little about the decadent and statist present that is worth conserving, and that any movement worthy of our praise should regard the term "right" as a badge of honor. Thus the phrase "Christian right" is fine by us.

Let's look at the real meaning and purpose of Kristol's "defense" of Christian political activism. In the early part of the essay, he points out that most of the issues that inspire the Christian right (abortion, pornography, and school prayer) were once controlled by local option. If a community wanted things a certain way, they were done that way. Minority interests had to live with it, and social peace prevailed.

Then the decisions were centralized in the federal courts, so that no community could ban pornography or abortion or permit prayer. The Christians who object, he writes, are "the defendants in this culture war we are living through, not the aggressors." So far, so good.

Then other shoe drops—as it usually does in the *Journal's* editorial pages—about two thirds of the way through Kristol's piece. It is here when he details the alleged problems with the Christian right. First, it lets the issue of abortion "dominate" its agenda. Second, it wants creationism taught in biology class. And third, it doesn't discriminate "among the pornographic, the bawdy, and the erotic."

Unlike Mr. Kristol, I'm not going to presume to have all the answers to the creation vs. evolution

debate. But I do know that there are plenty of serious people who doubt the official evolution story. Anyone even faintly familiar with the debate knows this is not simply a question of science vs. theology. Besides, the activists who campaign against high school biology texts are not campaigning against science. They object to having secular humanism taught to their kids under the guise of science.

As for porn, it's not the Christian right that can't distinguish between Boticelli and *Hustler*. It's the left that tells us both are forms of expression, ergo art, and that there is no essential difference. Recall that they called the Mapplethorpe exhibit a wonderful display of artistic virtuosity when it included pictures so indescribably grotesque that no major media outlets have yet described them, let alone reproduced them.

Look at any left-wing journal of opinion, or the sculptures littering the city halls of major cities, and it's clear that it's the left, not the right, that confuses art with trash. Dip into the debate on evolution and it's clear that it's the left that uses science to advance a particular view of God, namely that He doesn't exist. But not in Mr. Kristol's mind. His supposed defense of Christian political activists includes painting them as anti-science fanatics who would ban *Sports Illustrated*.

In making these criticisms, of course, Mr. Kristol is working from, and even endorsing, the stereotype promoted by the liberal media, as when the *Washington Post* said that evangelicals are poor, uneducated, and easy to lead. Moreover, there's a more fundamental problem at work in Mr. Kristol's essay.

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