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The Ethics of Democracy

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Sir Henry Maine

THE ETHICS OF DEMOCRACY.

BY PROFESSOR JOHN DEWEY.

Apparent contradictions always demand attention. When the contradiction is between a manner of life seemingly becoming universal, and a theory of this manner which makes it almost worthless, it is yet more striking. Such a contradiction we have in the present status of democracy. As it gains practical extension in the affairs of society, it is getting lower theoretical appreciation. While it has never had such an actual hold on life as at present, no observer can deny, I believe, that its defenders have never been so apologetic; its detractors so aggressive and pessimistic. To them, this state of affairs is no doubt additional evidence of the truth of their position; the more men see of democracy, the less they like it. The contradiction is thus easily accounted for. But those who believe that the practical instincts of men, as witnessed in a long stretch of history and over a broad area of political existence, do not easily go wholly wrong; and that in the case of a conflict of practical life with theoretical criticism, the latter is most apt to be at fault, will be likely to demand a revision of theory. Without further inquiry into the causes of this break between the beliefs of educated men, and the actual tendencies of political organisms, I wish to make one of its recent manifestations the excuse for an examination into the basal conception, the ideal of democracy. This is Sir Henry Maine's remarkable book on Popular Government,

This book gives the ablest and most coherent exposition of one school of political philosophy known to me, for it rests upon wide historical knowledge and is the product of keen analysis. Its examination accordingly will give not a criticism of Sir Henry Maine's individual views, but the means of coming to some conclusions regarding the fundamental nature of democracy. The thoroughness of Maine's position may be got at from the fact that he sees in democracy no historical meaning, no realization of any idea. It is but the "product of a whole series of accidents." Its future prospects are as uncertain as its past is brief. It is "the most fragile and insecure" of governments; since its introduction government is more instable than it has been since the time of the Pretorian Guards. Judging from past experience it always "ends in producing monstrous and morbid forms of monarchy and aristocracy." His account of its actual tendencies is such as his summary of its past career and vaticination of its future might lead us to expect. Its legislation is a wild burst of destructive wantonness; an arbitrary overthrow of all existing institutions, followed by a longer period in which its principles put an end to all social and political activity, and result in a dead level of ultra-conservatism," for, as he oracularly remarks: "There can be no delusion greater than that democracy is a progressive form of government." "The establishment of the masses in power is of blackest omen for all legislation founded on scientific opinion." The summary of the whole matter is the dictum approvingly quoted from Strauss, "History is a sound aristocrat."

As it is his theoretical, his philosophical basis that is in question here, these views may pass without question, although I confess that his ideas regarding the origin of

democracy seem to be based upon a view of history which denies to it all meaning except that arising from the accidental juxtaposition of circumstance; that his forebodings for its future rest upon an irrelevant basis; and that the supposed destructiveness is due to the occasional necessity of doing away with the evils engendered of aristocracy; and that the legislative infertility attributed to it goes rather to show that in every state except the democratic, the masses of the people are more opposed to change and progress than the few. And so it may well be. But the charge lies against the form of government which breeds such a mass, not against democracy.

But leaving these considerations, we must come to Maine's philosophy of democracy and government. Maine's fundamental position, the one which he considers indispensable to any understanding of the matter, is that "democracy is only a form of government." All views which attribute to it any significance or functions not based upon the clear insight that it is only one among various forms of government are to be ruled out. This is our starting point. The next step is as to the meaning of government. Here the view of Hobbes, as worked out by the analytic school of Bentham and Austin, is virtually adopted. Government is simply that which has to do with the relation of subject to sovereign, of political superior to inferior. This is the second point. The third concerns that which is taken as the distinguishing mark of governments—that which differentiates democracy from other forms. This is quantitative or numerical. If the sovereign is one or few, the subject a multitude, we have monarchy or aristocracy. If the sovereign is the multitude, the subject a small number, we have democracy. For it is a trait of democracy that the apparent ruler is in

reality the servant; the seeming subject the true ruler.

We have here in skeleton outline the main points of this school of political philosophy. But they must be expanded somewhat. Democracy is the rule of the Many, of the Mass. That is the essential point. Democracy is nothing but a numerical aggregate, a conglomeration of units. Democracy is, accordingly, the most difficult form of government. For while it is conceivable that one man or a few men should have a common will, in no intelligible sense can a multitude be said to exercise will (page 88). All government is based on the exercise of volition, and yet a multitude cannot be said to have a common will (p. 202). It must be manufactured, however, in order to have even a semblance of government, and Maine says the only powers adequate to bring about this artificial unity are party and corruption,—means of which, as he says, one is injurious to the intellect, the other to the morals of the governing mass (page 98). Democracy being this numerical aggregate, it follows, of course, that in it sovereignty or political power is minced into morsels and each man's portion is almost infinitesimally small (p. 29). Citizens in a democracy are "fragments of political power;" the growth of democracy is the "process of cutting up political power into petty fragments." Here we have the adequate theoretical explanation of the instability and the unprogressive character of democracy. Democracy, again, being a numerical aggregate, the multitude, although the ruler and master, is obliged to delegate his power, since being a multitude he cannot himself exercise it, to the so-called ruler (p. 81). In democracy, in short, the government is an external power formed by a process of delegation.

It will be seen accordingly, that the gist of the matter lies in the question whether democracy is adequately described as the rule of the many, whether the numerical attribute of democracy is primary and causal, or secondary and derived. From the decision of this question will flow the further answers to questions regarding, first, the nature of sovereignty, secondly, the relation of government to the State, or the adequacy of the delegation theory, and, finally, as to whether democracy is adequately described as only a form of government.

It is worth remarking that it is only superficially that Maine has the authority of Aristotle for defining democracy simply as the rule of the many. Aristotle, indeed, uses the numerical mark as the basis of his classification, but in his analysis he realizes what Maine never does: that in reality it is laws which govern the state, and that the men, whether few or many, are but the instruments of the law. Many results follow, of course, from this latter trait; it is not a matter of indifference whether few or many rule; but the essential characteristic of each State is found, after all, in its form of constitution and organic law. And certainly the whole drift of political theory since the abstract natural right philosophy of the French Revolution has been towards the conception that society is an organism, and government an expression of its organic nature. If this be so, it is no more adequately defined by any merely quantitative conception than a tree is defined by counting the number of cells which constitute it.

What makes it more surprising that Maine should adopt the numerical aggregation, the multitude conception, is the fact that in times past he has dealt such vigorous blows against a theory which is the natural and inev-

itable outcome of this conception. The "Social Contract" theory of States has never been more strongly attacked than by Maine, and yet the sole source of this theory is just such a conception of society, as a mass of units, as the one Maine here adopts. The essence of the "Social Contract" theory is not the idea of the formulation of a contract; it is the idea that men are mere individuals, without any social relations *until* they form a contract. The method by which they get out of their individualistic condition is not the important matter; rather this is the fact, that they are in an individualistic condition out of which they have to be got. The notion, in short, which lay in the minds of those who proposed this theory was that men in their natural state are non-social units, are a mere multitude; and that some artifice must be devised to constitute them into political society. And this artifice they found in a contract which they entered into with one another. Maine rejects this artifice as unreal, but keeps the fundamental idea, the idea of men as a mere mass, which led to it.

The fact is, however, that the theory of the "social organism," that theory that men are not isolated non-social atoms, but are men only when in intrinsic relations to men, has wholly superseded the theory of men as an aggregate, as a heap of grains of sand needing some factitious mortar to put them into semblance of order. This, indeed, does not make it incumbent upon one to accept the one theory or to reject the other; the argument to authority is always open to question; but it does make it incumbent that one rest his case upon something more than a definition which begs the question by its very make-up. For the picture which is drawn of democracy is, in effect, simply an account of Anarchy. To define democracy

simply as the rule of the many, as sovereignty chopped up into mince meat, is to define it as abrogation of society, as society dissolved, annihilated. When so defined, it may be easily shown to be instable to the last degree, and so difficult that a common will must be manufactured—if not by means of a contract, then by means of a combined action of the firm of Party and Corruption.

But if we do not start with a definition of democracy which makes it equivalent to the destruction of society, it may not be found so easy to derive all these evil consequences from it. If we start from the conception of a social organism, the *prima facie* case stands quite otherwise. For while in a mass, in a numerical aggregate, the ultimate reality is an individual unit, and the isolated atoms are the “facts of the case”, in an organism man is essentially a social being. Society in its unified and structural character is the fact of the case; the non-social individual is an abstraction arrived at by imagining what man would be if all his human qualities were taken away. Society, as a real whole, is the normal order, and the mass as an aggregate of isolated units is the fiction. If this be the case, and if democracy be a form of society, it not only does have, but must have, a common will; for it is this unity of will which makes it an organism. A State represents men so far as they have become organically related to one another, or are possessed of unity of purpose and interest. But as Maine’s *a priori* definition of democracy, based upon an exploded theory of society, does not suffice to condemn democracy, neither will a conception of it which rests upon an accepted theory suffice to justify it. No one can claim that any society is wholly organized, or possessed of one interest and will to the exclusion of all struggle and opposition and hostility. There are still

classes within society, circles within the classes and cliques within the circles. If it can be shown that democracy more than other forms tends to multiply these subdivisions, that it tends to increase this opposition; that it strengthens their efficiency at the expense of the working force of the organism—in short, that its tendencies are towards disintegration, towards mere government by the mass, on the one side, and resolution into infinitesimal fragments, on the other, the case against democracy is amply made out. But an arbitrary definition and analysis will not serve.

What gives the democracy more than other forms of government the appearance of being a mere rule of a mass or multitude is, without doubt, the use which it makes of individual suffrage on the one hand and majority rule on the other. Since it thus appears to decide all questions of policy and of men by mere weighing of numbers, it is easy to represent democracy as concerned for the most part with a problem in arithmetic. Analytic abstraction, having perchance already deprived men of all their qualities due to their social relations, now proceeds further to reduce them into merely numerical individuals, into ballot-projecting units. Then the mere accident of a few bare units more or less on this side or that, seems, by bare numerical preponderance, to form the will of the people in this direction or that. Such is the theoretical analysis of democracy most often presented to us. Many of its upholders have no more adequate idea of it than this, and rest for their final support on the fact that after all the numerical majority would have, in case of an appeal to arms, the brute force to coerce the minority. Such presentations come off very poorly when compared with the sketch of an ideal aristocracy, where not

mere stress of numbers, but superiority in wisdom, elevation in goodness, enable the few having these qualities to guide the mass without them. All Carlyle's political writings rest their lamentation on just such a conception of democracy as this numerical one, which he has set forth in a more many-sided, vivid and forcible way than even Sir Henry Maine. And the educated men of to-day, who have been trained exclusively in the school of physical science, with its tendencies toward mechanical and mathematical abstraction, almost without exception have no notion of the meaning of democracy other than this.

But the student of society has constantly to be on his guard against the abstract and purely mechanical notions introduced from the physical sciences. If he will beware of such abstractions, he will remember that men cannot be reduced for political purposes, any more than for any other, to bare figure ones, marks to be placed in rows set over against one another. A man when he comes to vote does not put off from him, like a suit of old clothes, his character, his wealth, his social influence, his devotion to political interests, and become a naked unit. He carries with him in his voting all the influence that he should have, and if he deserves twice as much as another man, it is safe to say that he decides twice as many votes as that other man. Even if his character is corrupt, and his devotion to politics is from motives of self, it yet remains true that he votes, not as a mere unit, but as a representative of the social organism.) It is only because society allows him, nay, grants him power on such grounds, that he can use it. His very corruption is the expression of society through him. A vote, in other words, is not an impersonal counting of one; it is a manifestation of some tendency of the social organism through a member of that organism.

But this only touches the matter. There still appears to be in majority rule an instrument for putting all on a dead level, and allowing numerical surplus to determine the outcome. But the heart of the matter is found not in the voting nor in the counting the votes to see where the majority lies. It is in the process by which the majority is formed. The minority are represented in the policy which they force the majority to accept in order to be a majority; the majority have the right to 'rule' because their majority is not the mere sign of a surplus in numbers, but is the manifestation of the purpose of the social organism. Were this not so, every election would be followed by a civil war; there would be no need of writing concerning the weakness of popular government; it would be the only striking fact about democracy. I know of no one by whom this matter of majority rule is better stated than by the late Gov. Tilden—whose opinion is the more worth quoting in this connection because he too saw in democracy only a device for carrying on government. He calls attention to the fact that generally the difference between the minority and the majority party in a general election does not exceed five per cent. of the entire vote. Instead of jumping at the conclusion that thus a small proportion of the population really determines the policy of the whole, he sees that the small numerical difference is in reality testimony to the coinciding of the two parties. "The minority," he says, "adopts enough of the ideas of the majority to attract those who are nearest to the line of division; and the majority in struggling to reclaim them makes concessions. The issue is thus constantly shifting with the wavering tide of battle, until the policy which at last prevails has become adjusted so as nearly to represent the average sense of the whole people."

In shaping the policy which emerges from the conflict the minority acts a part scarcely less important than the majority." (Tilden. Works, vol i, p 290). Or as he sums up the whole matter: "In trying to acquire the means to govern, the majority becomes qualified to govern."* When, therefore, we hear the derider of democracy discrediting it by declaring that through manhood suffrage and majority rule all are put on a level, with no quality concerned but their numerical, we may be confident that he has only the most superficial view of the matter, and that the process of finding out the policy of the majority is the process by which the social organism weighs considerations and forms its consequent judgment; that the voting of the individual represents in reality, a deliberation, a tentative opinion on the part of the whole organism.

We must now turn to the other side of the picture. The theory which makes of democratic society a mere mass, makes, on the other hand, the democratic citizen a mere minced morsel of this mass, a disorganized fragment. If, however, society be truly described as organic, the citizen is a member of the organism, and, just in proportion to the perfection of the organism, has concentrated within himself its intelligence and will. Disguise it as we may, this theory can have but one result, that of the sovereignty of the citizen. There are various theories which have served to keep this in the background, and to hide the fact that the ordinary American expression of the sovereignty of every elector is not a mere exaggerated

* The only case in which such statements cease to represent facts is when a constitutional amendment is submitted to a people, and they are compelled to vote yes or no, with no possibility of modification or amendment. But this is only an argument against the plebiscitum, (for such this process really is) not against democracy.

burst of individualistic feeling, fostered through crude Fourth of July patriotism, but is the logical outcome of the organic theory of society.

There is the French theory which makes sovereignty the *natural* (that is, the pre-political, even the non-political) attribute of the people; a trait inhering in the people by mere stress of their including everyone within themselves, without respect to organization. There is the German theory, which, although recognizing professedly the organic conception, rids it of its significance in this respect by giving a physiological sense to the term, by interpreting the term in analogy with the human body. Thus Bluntschli, in spite of all that there is valuable in him, cannot free himself from the idea that since society is an organism it must have something corresponding to the division of sexes, to the limbs, to the trunk, and to the head. Just as the head represents the wisdom and control of the body, so the mystic attribute of sovereignty, which is diffused indeed in a vague way through the nation, gets reality only in the aureole that rests upon the monarch. The English theory, as presented by Hobbes and worked out by Austin, virtually makes it consist in irresponsible power. According to one theory, sovereignty is located in the people as a whole, one might say as a mob; according to another it is latent in the nation as a definite political body, but manifest only in the head of the nation; according to the third (the one adopted here at least by Maine) it is situated in whatever portions of the state have the power to make, alter and enforce laws without appeal. If we take the latter notion, sovereignty is simply power to do this or that. It follows that in the democratic state (according to Maine's conception of it as a multitude) this power must be divided into

fragments, each citizen having simply his fractional part of the total amount of sovereignty at command. Thus the exercise of sovereignty is a question of division, just as the formation of a common will is one in addition. Given so much sovereignty, and so many citizens, how much does each member have? The individual, the ultimate unit, thus becomes an n -millionth of political power. But if we really adopt the organic conception of society, the case stands quite otherwise. The attempt to make the organic theory work only in one direction, namely, as applicable to society but not to its members, is to deny the theory. This is as much an account of the individual as it is of the whole. One who has really adopted the notion can say not less, but more than any one else, that society exists for and by individuals. But it is because he has given up the fiction of isolated unsocial units, and has realized that the individual embodies and realizes within himself the spirit and will of the whole organism.

This is not the place for an examination of the conception of organism; but it must be remembered that it is a thoroughly reciprocal conception. The animal body is not the type of an organism, because the members, the organs, have their life, after all, only as parts, conditioned by their external space relations. They indeed participate in the life of the whole, while the whole lives in them, giving them their activity. But they are absorbed in this whole. The whole has not given its life to them so freely that they can take on the appearance of independent lives, isolated in space. The organic relation is incomplete. But human society represents a more perfect organism. The whole lives truly in every member, and there is no longer the appearance of physical aggregation, or contin-

uity. The organism manifests itself as what it truly is, an ideal or spiritual life, a unity of *will*. [If then, society and the individual are really organic to each other, then the individual is society concentrated. He is not merely its image or mirror. He is the localized manifestation of its life. And if, as actually happens, society be not yet possessed of one will, but partially is one and partially has a number of fragmentary and warring wills, it yet follows that *so far* as society has a common purpose and spirit, *so far* each individual is not representative of a certain proportionate share of the sum total of will, but is its vital embodiment. And this is the theory, often crudely expressed, but none the less true in substance, that every citizen is a sovereign, the American theory, a doctrine which in grandeur has but one equal in history, and that its fellow, namely, that every man is a priest of God.

In conception, at least, democracy approaches most nearly the ideal of all social organization; that in which the individual and society are organic to each other. For this reason democracy, so far as it is really democracy, is the most stable, not the most insecure, of governments. In every other form of government there are individuals who are not organs of the common will, who are outside of the political society in which they live, and are, in effect, aliens to that which should be their own commonwealth. Not participating in the formation or expression of the common will, they do not embody it in themselves. Having no share in society, society has none in them. Such is the origin of that body of irreconcilables which Maine, with inverted logic, attributes to democracy.

We have thus far analyzed the popular numerical conception of democracy as bearing upon the notions of

the common will and of sovereignty. We have now to examine it in its relation to the theory of government. From this quantitative notion it necessarily follows that government comes into being by the process stated by Maine, that of delegation. If society is only a mass or aggregate, it must call government into being by some artificial means. There then exist two classes, one of governors, one of governed, and the only question is as to which is the real master, which the real servant. Democracy, like every other form of government, has these two classes set over against each other, but it reverses the relation existing in aristocracy. But, once more, if society be organic, the notion of two classes, one of which is inferior to the other, falls to the ground. The basal conception, here, is of unity, and all distinctions must occur within and on account of this unity. The organism must have its spiritual organs; having a common will, it must express it. A national consciousness which does not give itself outward reality, which does not objectify itself, is like any other consciousness in similar plight—simply non-existent. There is, indeed, a popular but none the less superficial mode of speech which identifies the government and the state. This is as if a physiologist were to identify seeing with the eye, or even with the whole body. The eye is the body organized for seeing, and just so government is the state organized for declaring and executing its judgments. Government is to the state what language is to thought; it not only communicates the purposes of the state, but in so doing gives them for the first time articulation and generality.

The chief bearing of this upon our present discussion lies in the fact that it does away with the dualism inherent in the delegation theory. Government does not mean |

one class or side of society set over against the other. The government is not made up of those who hold office, or who sit in the legislature. It consists of every member of political society. And this is true of democracy, not less, but more, than of other forms. The democratic formula that government derives its powers from the consent of the governed, like the theory of the sovereignty of the political citizen, has suffered as much at the hands of its friends as of its enemies; but its true significance is not thereby destroyed. It means that in democracy, at all events, the governors and the governed are not two classes, but two aspects of the same fact—the fact of the possession by society of a unified and articulate will. It means that government is the organ of society, and is as comprehensive as society. Here, as before, we may reverse Maine's argument and say that democracy, since it more fully conforms to the ideal of society, is more stable than aristocracy. Wherever government is a matter of birth, of heredity, of wealth, of superior 'social' standing, in a word, of privilege, society is still unorganized, and in so far, chaotic. There are two wills; the governors and the governed are two separate classes. Unless there is complete despotism or stagnation, there is constant clashing of the two wills contained, and a constant shifting of power. There is a condition of unstable equilibrium. What Plato said of his ideal state, we may with greater truth say of democracy: "What simplicity is this that you should use the term 'state' of any but ours! Other states may indeed be spoken of more grandiloquently and in the plural number—for they are many. Any ordinary state, however small, is indeed two states at war with each other, and in either division there are many smaller states." (Rep. B'k IV, 423.) And again

as Plato acutely remarks: "All political changes originate in divisions of the governing power, for a government which is united, however small, cannot be moved." (Rep. B'k VIII, 545.)

We have completed the first part of our examination. We have considered the theory of democratic government suggested by Sir Henry Maine, so far as it relates to the conception of the common will, of the individual citizen, and of the origin of government. We have now to see whether we can stop with the idea of democracy as merely a form of government, or whether it implies something more. James Russell Lowell is a man of letters, not a professed student of politics, and yet where he says of democracy that he is "speaking of a sentiment, a spirit, and not of a form of government, for this is but the outgrowth of the latter and not its cause," we must recognize that the weight of history and of politics is on his side, as it is not on that of Maine. The conception that democracy and aristocracy are expedients for reaching certain jural ends, for exercising certain police powers, for compelling obedience, and that the sole question is as to what piece of machinery can accomplish this most efficiently, and with the greatest stability and economy, is one which has no justification outside of abstract theory. It is the relic of the time when governmental polities were regarded as articles of clothing, to be cut and sewed by any acute political tailor, and fitted to any nation. It belongs to a time when it was thought that a constitution could be made *ad hoc*, and established on a *tatula rasa* of past history, also manufactured with express reference to the given case. A government springs from a vast mass of sentiments, many vague, some defined, of instincts, of aspirations, of ideas, of hopes and fears, of purposes. It

is their reflex and their incorporation; their projection and outgrowth. Without this basis, it is nothing worth. A gust of prejudice, a blow of despotism, and it falls like a card house. To say that democracy is *only* a form of government is like saying that home is a more or less geometrical arrangement of bricks and mortar; that the church is a building with pews, pulpit and spire. It is true; they certainly are so much. But it is false; they are so infinitely more. 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-

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 polities 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 selfhold 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 caring for the state." It is to the one wise man, or to the

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 aristocratical 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 aristocratical 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 aristocratical 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

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-

dividual; 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,

—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 all 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

initiation from within, without an ideal chosen from within and freely followed from within, is nothing.

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 ones 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-

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

adherents, always by its oponents, 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;

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.

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 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.