

# IDEALS IN DICTATORSHIPS AND DEMOCRACIES

W. C. KEIRSTEAD

**T**ERMS have both intension and extension of meaning. In extension dictatorships include Italy, Germany, perhaps also Japan and Russia to-day. The dictatorship of the proletariat has turned into a dictatorship over the proletariat, and Stalin takes his place as one of the great triumvirate of living dictators. These dictatorships seem to be extending their power and influence in Europe and in other portions of the globe. The extent of democracy, although yet very large, has been decreasing, and its influence lessening in the world.

In its intension dictatorship means a form of government in which absolute authority resides in a supreme leader, as in the countries mentioned, or in a small class. Obedience to such authority is the supreme virtue demanded of all citizens. As a form of social organization, dictatorship is of a military nature; authority flows from the top downward to subordinates, based upon the leadership principle; dominates all social organizations and institutions, and conditions the emotions, attitudes and beliefs of individuals. No government can be entirely indifferent to the opinions and emotions of the masses, and on this account dictatorship creates and establishes beliefs and attitudes by propoganda and education. But education is indoctrination, and an appeal to emotional responses of the masses to produce uniformity of feeling, belief and attitudes. As will be indicated later, such a system fails to give a real place to individual freedom or to encourage initiative. Conformity and obedience are the essential virtues of social value.

Democracy as a form of political organization is a government which exists by the consent of the governed. The *aims* of government as well as the *means* for their attainment are continuously subjected to criticism and evaluation by the common citizens. As a mode of civilization, democracy is characterized by its faith in freedom—freedom of the individual to make and to act upon his own judgment. This deep-rooted desire for freedom democracy develops and uses as essential for individual and social welfare and progress. If all men are not equal, yet at least democracy regards men as having a degree of equality, and it demands greater equality of opportunity for self-realization, and a removal of inequalities which arise from class restrictions and discriminations. It asserts that each

person, according to his capacities and attainments, should have opportunity to contribute alike to the formation and reformation of growing social values and to the means for their progressive realization, and also to share in the goods or values of the common life, if not according to his needs, at least according to the necessities for a minimum standard of well-being and of social efficiency. It doth not yet appear what democracy shall be, but its meaning so far as it pertains to the individual and to society will be more fully developed in the rest of this article.

### I. PERSONALITY.

The democratic state places supreme value upon personality. Its goal is the development and happiness according to potentiality or capacity of each individual. The person is the end and the state is the means. For democracy intrinsic goods are human goods—they are goods that enrich human life and increase human happiness. The good state is the one in which men and women live meaningful and noble lives, and in which children find opportunity to develop into the full maturity of their capacities. This ideal of personality is a heritage from our Christian religion. It was Jesus who taught the infinite worth of personality, and who declared that to offend one of his little ones was to commit an unpardonable sin. Said Lord Baldwin, in perhaps the last public statement he made as Prime Minister, "The Christian Church declares the person to be supreme. The servile state denies this. Every compromise with the infinite value of the human soul leads straight back to savagery and to the jungles. Expel this truth from our religion, and what follows? The insolence of dominion and the cruelty of despotism."

The totalitarian state denies this worth of the individual. The state as the end has supreme value, and the individual is as such a mere means for its ends. What is more in Germany, this state is partly biological and partly racial, an essence or being which continues throughout history as a self-contained personality—a kind of metaphysical self which subordinates all human selves to its own ends. As racial, it can be corrupted by any mixture of non-Aryan blood, and as racial and national alike it excludes from its membership most of mankind. Rights are state and not human rights. Values inhere not in individuals but in the state; truth, science, justice, the rule of law are not human and universal, but are national. The infinite worth of personality and the common brotherhood of man are denied by this conception of the state.

In the Soviet state of Russia there has been a similar denial of the supreme value of the individual. To achieve the collective method in agriculture, Stalin carried into captivity many millions of the Kulaks and allowed millions of other Russian peasants to die of slow starvation. These brutal acts of the Russian dictator have alienated many persons who were sympathetic to the Communistic experiment. Democracy has often turned a deaf ear to human needs, it has been indifferent to and neglectful of human suffering, but it would not deliberately torture one helpless child for an end of the state. I know that democracy is guilty of countless cruelties, but the persons who can see no difference between the deeds of Stalin and Hitler and the working of our democratic systems does not possess a comparative sense of values. These cruelties of the dictators are justified by the ends of the state it is sought to attain, but as Dr. Dewey has recently stated, "means" have a way of working back into "ends" so as to change the nature of the latter. Institutions are instrumental values, but the final values are found in the happiness and development of human persons.

The super-organic nature of the state has been justified by Fascists on the ground that the democratic emphasis upon personality is just a form of selfish individualism. It is, we are told, the philosophy of individualistic industrialism, of unrestricted competition as the fundamental principle of capitalism. But for democracy the individual is in his essence a social being, and can develop and live richly "only as a member of the group and only as the group lives richly". "Intimate and effective social membership becomes a major criterion for guiding individual development. Active membership in a human society is the sole source of any significant personal life". The conception of the individual taken in isolation as complete in itself has no scientific standing to-day. The sum of the atoms taken in their isolation and separateness does not become thereby an atmosphere. For oxygen atoms, for example, cannot be found except in association with other atoms. The properties of oxygen are just its patterns of behaviour, that is, its manner of associating with other atoms. To sever all these associations or strip off all these properties is to get as a result not pure oxygen, but a non-entity. The sum of the cells of a human body taken in isolation and separateness does not of course make a living whole, but only a mass of dead cells; but these same cells taken in their inter-relations and functions as part of the organism do make up the living body. The organism

is just another name for the totality of cells taken in their concreteness and inter-relationships in the life process.

A small number of individuals, arbitrarily selected and grouped, do not constitute a family, yet a family does consist of individuals related in a biological and social pattern. There is no super-mind in addition to the minds of the individual members of the family, yet the aims of the family may be far sighted and social if one member, at least, of the family is intelligent and socially minded.

In like manner, persons do not exist in isolation but in associations, or in social pattern such as the family, church, state, industrial and other voluntary associations. In each association the individual person is the centre of all conscious activity; there is no mind save that of the individual members. He is the home of all values, and his individual intelligence is the centre of all invention, discovery and consequently of all progress. All happiness or suffering and therefore all moral good must exist in the consciousness of persons. The so-called super-organic mind with its state ideals is in reality the mind of the dictator, and the good of the state is generally his own ambition for glory and greatness, or at least it is his conception of the good of the state. The sum total of individuals taken in their concreteness of inter-relations and "society" are but two names for the same reality. The common good is therefore not something apart from individuals, but it is the good life as experienced by individuals, and as this in turn reacts upon social organizations to produce better conditions for the personal realization of capacities and happiness.

A recent writer has put this truth in these words; "This emphasis upon the common good is not something apart from the satisfaction of individuals. The individual and society as independent entities are fictions. Individuals are as inextricably a part of society as any organ is of the body. So society is an organism the elements of which are individuals. Yet individuals are the only sentient beings. A good must be a good for some individual. Seeking the common good is merely in order that we may achieve a richness of life for more individuals or an increased richness for all. But because any significant individual life to-day is so completely integrated with that of the group, the welfare of the group is of paramount importance".

## II. SOCIETY.

In the democratic view, society and individuals are names for the same reality. Taken distributively, in their concreteness

and inter-relations, the social whole is composed of individuals; but when we take it collectively, as an organic whole, we use the word society. But society apart from individuals and individuals apart from society are but fictions. Since society includes all individuals in their inter-relations and functions, it comprehends all human associations with their institutions and customs. Society, therefore, is the more comprehensive term. On the other hand, the state is but one association among others. Just as an atom of oxygen does not exhaust its properties in one combination, so no person expresses all his qualities in one association. He may belong to many associations such as the home, state, church, industry, vocational or professional or other voluntary associations.

Undoubtedly the state is an important association, since it establishes and supports those basic principles of law and order, the maintenance of justice and of peace which are essential for all other associations and indeed for all forms of social living. There are other functions that the state may exercise; its laws alone have universal application and compulsory power, and it can provide such services as need these qualities for their maintenance. But these also bring limitations of state functions. There are services that can be better rendered by some form of voluntary association other than the state. Democracy holds that since the state is but one form of human association, it is by no means all of society. It urges that there are many functions that voluntary associations can provide much better than the state, and that it is quite as important for human progress and happiness that these voluntary associations be protected in their sphere and be afforded an opportunity to act as it is to protect and secure the state in the exercise of its functions. There are undoubtedly functions that the state alone can adequately perform; there are others that voluntary associations can perform more effectively, and there are others that may be performed by either, and it is matter for experimentation to determine how these can be performed with the greatest economy and satisfaction to society.

On the other hand, the totalitarian state claims to be all inclusive and to be equated with society. Society and the state are one. It does not eliminate all other associations, but it comprehends and dominates them; it hems them about with many restrictions, and makes them subservient to the ends of the state and as it were tools or instruments for its purpose. But this very domination often destroys the very nature and

function of these otherwise free associations. The home and the church need a large measure of freedom and full protection from state domination if they are to serve their members. A totalitarian state becomes a tyranny, and crushes out some of the highest values in life. Religion is best served when it is left largely to the individual conscience, and when worship is the free expression of the human spirit. Voluntary association of believers in the organization of their choice has been most fruitful for religious development, and has given most happiness to religious persons. The struggle for religious freedom has been one of the great struggles for human freedom. Yet in Russia and in Germany especially we have witnessed the effort of an all-powerful state to crush out religious freedom and to enslave the Church to the unholy ends of the state.

The state in both countries has waged this war against freedom in the Church because it has found in it ideals that did not conform with those of a pagan state. The Christian religion with its doctrine of forgiveness, with its spirit of mercy and love, with its faith in the redemption of the vilest sinner, with its belief in the brotherhood of man and the universal rule of love on earth, is alien to class and race prejudice and persecution and the liquidation of enemies. The destruction of religious freedom is a heavy price to pay for a totalitarian state. If reason and love are stronger than brute force, if freedom is one of the mightiest impulses in human nature, then there is an inevitable weakness in a totalitarian state.

Industry becomes a state function in the totalitarian state. Russia is supposed to be the state of the proletariat, although keen observers tell us that a new middle class, composed largely of state officials, is arising, and under it the proletariat has not greatly improved its position. Would the development of the cooperative movement among the peasants and the maintenance of the freedom of the labour unions have given quite as large production as the present state system, and avoided the large scale coercions and murders of the state?

In Germany the dictator state has been forced from one step to another in its regulation of industry, until private enterprise has practically given place to another form of state industry. A correspondent of the *Manchester Guardian* has recently pointed out that the enormous expenditures by the state for public works and rearmament increased imports and necessitated state regulation of foreign exchange; the low wage of the state reduced consumption, and led to state control of loans and new investments and to their direction into favored



industries; then, as capacity production was reached, the state regulated prices and rationed raw materials. To-day both farmers and industrials bid fare to become employees of the huge state concern. A handful of big industrials may for the time being enjoy good profits; but "where," asks the correspondent, "are they going to find a safe investment for them?" "If national socialism enslaves labour and destroys capital whom is it going to benefit?"

Democracy makes use of voluntary associations in industry, but it is not without its problems. Our industrial system has shown serious defects and grave abuses. It will no longer do for reactionaries and privileged classes to stir up in the masses prejudices against Communism and Fascism in order to defeat any attempt at reorganization and reform. We must have more planning in production to avoid periods of depression and unemployment; we must recognize the right of all to remunerative labour, and conserve both our natural and human resources; we must eliminate gambling in industry and provide a more just distribution of income. Industry must serve the ideals of democracy. But we must work out our reforms in keeping with our democratic principles. An economic system established by force will need force for its continuance.

Democracy depends upon free discussion, investigation and experimentation for unity and progress; a dictatorship depends upon propaganda and force. A dictatorship decides the ends that the state must realize and then calls upon its historians, scientists, teachers and propagandists to provide the means for their realization. But should any of these state workers question the value of the ends, he becomes at once a counter-revolutionary or a treasonable person, to be placed in confinement or perhaps to be executed. Both Russia and Germany have confined, driven into exile, tortured and executed a large number of their most highly educated and brilliant citizens.

Again, dictator states specialize in propaganda and have a ministry of propaganda. The radio, the press, the theatre, the schools and the Church are all subordinated to the state and used for propaganda purposes; mass demonstrations and regimentations are used for their emotional appeal. Then the country is hermetically sealed against all foreign ideals in order to secure uniformity in feeling, thought and action. Yet with all this there is constant espionage, terrorism and executions against underground revolution. For these dictators fear democratic ideals more than the saint fears the Evil One.

Democracy finds its security in freedom of investigation and discussion. The totalitarian state cannot have an opposition, but democracy has within its government "His Majesty's loyal Opposition" with an essential function to perform. When ideas conflict with ideas, then there is analysis, discrimination of truth from error and a survival of the truth—that is the method of democracy. Freedom is fundamental for democracy. Freedom of discussion, of press and of assembly; freedom of the scientist in his investigations, of the teacher in teaching, of the preacher in his pulpit and of the editor in his paper. Take away from democracy this liberty of discussion, and democracy ceases to exist.

The future of democracy depends upon education and education is not propaganda, but is primarily a training in the methods of correct thinking, in the methods by which error is eliminated in investigation and truth is discovered. This is the scientific method of reflective and experimental thinking. Consequently democratic education is not so much concerned with "conditioning", with teaching *what* to think, as it is with teaching *how* to think; not in producing an automatic adjustment to a fixed system, but in developing a capacity of self adjustment to an ever changing world. Democracy educates to fit for life as it is now being lived, but also for life as it will probably be lived in the future; for life as it is actually lived and for life as it should be lived by rational and social beings. Democracy educates to preserve what is good in the existing order, and also to promote progress and reform.

If, therefore, democracy is to endure, it must not resort to the restrictions of Fascism or Communism, but it must widen and deepen the realm of human freedom. Democracy rests upon an educated citizenship; one that will discriminate between truth and propaganda, and will not be swayed to irrational conclusions by emotional appeals. Such citizens will look backward upon the past with appreciation for its values, but they will look forward to our new conditions with courage and conviction, and will seek to solve their problems by the best methods of scientific investigation. Educated citizens are open-minded to truth, they will seek precise information of fact and demand expert skill and knowledge when the situation requires it. "Come now and let us reason together" will be the motto of the democracy of tomorrow. Rational cooperation in attaining social ends is the aim of democratic education.

A living faith in freedom and a devotion to it, unto death, if need be, is essential if democracy is not "to perish from the earth".