

CVII – Democrazies

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By Butler Shaffer

Democracy is also a form of worship. It is the worship of Jackals by Jackasses.

~ H.L. Mencken

Readers of my writings know that I embrace no religious doctrines, which helps account for the enjoyment I derive from assailing all who choose to forcibly impose their belief systems upon others. I find great amusement in the secular statist who sanctimoniously condemn what has come to be known as the "religious u2018Right'" for holding various social/political views on the basis of "faith." As one who opposes every manifestation of the state, I have no more defense to make of the religious "Right," "Left," or "Center," than I do the secular "Right," "Left," or "Center." I believe that people have a need for spiritual expression, and that such need can only be fulfilled within each individual, not by trying to reform the thinking or behavior of others.

That said, I must concede to members of the religious "Right" a quality that is absent among most secularists: a willingness to acknowledge that those with whom they disagree may nonetheless be intelligent, well-educated men and women. Indeed, they are prone to stigmatize their opponents as "intellectuals," often resorting to such adjectives as "ivory-towered" or "pointy-headed" for emphasis. The secularists may be considered wrong, sinful, or downright evil, but they are recognized for having thought-out opinions that must be challenged.

Most secularists, however, have a glaring blind-spot when it comes to their basic articles of faith. Few are prepared to admit that one can contravene any of their core principles and still be regarded as intelligent. Egalitarianism, the need for central state planning, feminism, "affirmative action," the welfare state, gun control, and the need to redistribute wealth, are just a few of the canons comprising the religion of secularism. Those who shriek at any mention of the "Ten Commandments" will as vociferously attack those who transgress the tenets of "political correctness." The questioning of any of these maxims can, as the president of Harvard University recently discovered, lead to charges of "heresy" and dismissal from a college appointment. What is just as remarkable — particularly on a university campus — is the inability of most of the secular faithful to defend their positions through either rational or empirical means. They fall back upon the same non-intellectual line often ascribed to religious adherents: "to those who understand, no explanation is necessary; to those who do not, no explanation is possible."

Having spent most of my adult life on university campuses, I can testify to the insular nature of such secularized thinking. My opposition to "affirmative action" admission of students, for example, is well-established, but when I have cause to restate my views on the matter to my colleagues, my words are still met with dumbfounded stares. They look at me with utter amazement, as if to wonder how anyone can go all the way through college and law school and not think as they do. After all, is it not the purpose of formal education to mold adults into a common mindset? What is to be done with those who manage to fall through cracks in the net of collectivist thinking?

My undergraduate education was at a state university. Across town was a Methodist university, whose campus was well-known — even at the time — as a setting in which questions regarding the existence of God were openly and intelligently discussed. To my knowledge, however, the basic premises of statism were never directly confronted amongst the state university's faculty. I did have a political philosophy professor with a decidedly conservative bent who was a great fan of John Locke, but apart from this man, the campus was as devoid of even a whisper of individualistic, anti-collectivist opinion as most remain today.

A political imperative whose questioning will not be tolerated by most secularists is a belief in "democracy." I still recall the look on the face of one faculty member who, years ago, thought he had cornered me in an intellectual debate. "You do believe in democracy, though, don't you?" When I told him I did not, he had that same look on his face that Galileo must have seen in his inquisitors.

In a post-Renaissance world of enlightenment thinking, the "divine right of kings" explanation could no longer be counted upon by the political class to justify its rule. A new sales gimmick was required. On the surface, the democratic principle had an air of plausibility to it: if government was inevitable, better to have its policies and practices determined by the general public than by an elite of rulers. In such a way, it was imagined, bloody warfare could be reduced and individual liberty preserved, as people would be disinclined to foster their own destruction and enslavement.

Only the foolish would accept this newfound rationale for state power as a virtue in itself. But, as Mencken also advised: "No one in this world, so far as I know . . . has ever lost money by underestimating the intelligence of the great masses of the plain people." To the statists — ancient or modern — "democracy" became but another useful concept with which to condition weak minds to accept political rule. Like the earlier proposition that obedience to medieval tyrannies was divinely inspired, the replacement god, Demos, was pressed into service for politically pragmatic purposes. It was never intended to be taken as a universal principle.

That Americans could be stampeded into that abattoir known as World War I – allegedly in furtherance of this doctrine – while their modern counterparts continue to sanction the lies and deceit underlying President Bush's worldwide campaign for "democracy," shows how deeply this idea has infected people's minds. Democracy has become no more the expression of a popular will than theocracies were of a divine one. Like its predecessor, representative government simply became a new set of bromides with which the power-hungry could rationalize their appetites for control of the lives of their neighbors. In each instance, all the statists had to do was convince their victims of [1] the legitimacy of their system of rule, and [2] their capacity to serve either divine or popular will. The costumes, rituals, and rhetoric of Henry VIII and George W. Bush may differ, but the underlying logic and dynamics of their rule are identical. These men could exchange seats of power with nary a break in the meter of their edicts: only new speechwriters and court historians with new slogans would be called into play. Thomas More would now be charged with "terrorism" instead of "treason," and imprisoned at Guantanamo Bay instead of the Tower of London; and repression of dissent would remain the order of the day.

You will have a hard time discerning any true respect for the democratic principle among today's ruling class. French voters overwhelmingly rejected the constitution of the European Union, but President Chirac quickly embraced his German co-conspirator, Chancellor Schroeder, to circumvent this expression of popular will. The British and Norwegian governments, meanwhile, are considering whether it is now wise to allow for a public referendum on the EU! When, in 2001, Irish voters rejected the Treaty of Nice by a 54-46% majority, government officials demanded another vote on the question!

If one pays close attention to details, an interesting pattern emerges: European political rulers tend to favor the EU — even in countries where the public rejected it — and, following the French and Dutch voters' disapproval of same, began campaigning for new referenda on the question. They will allow the voters to express themselves on this matter, but only until they eventually vote the way their masters demand. You will note that in the countries in which voters approved of the EU constitution (e.g., Spain) no talk of another vote will be entertained!

In differing ways, the people of Iraq and Europe are discovering that democracy is just one more scam by which a power elite organizes the systematic machinery of violence to dominate and despoil their lives. Were there any minds in the establishment media or academia with the intellectual courage to ask the question, the obvious inquiry could be made: how is the slaughter of over 100,000 innocent Iraqis at all consistent with the stated purpose of bringing democracy to that nation?

"Democracy" is but one of the many lies we keep repeating to ourselves in an effort to believe, in the words of Voltaire's Dr. Pangloss, that our self-destructive society represents "the best of all possible worlds." Democracy is the illusion that you and I, combined, have

twice the political influence of David Rockefeller, and Americans cling to this illusion as fiercely as Linus does to his blanket. Despite their insistence upon this principle, the will of voters is no more a central feature of American politics than it is in any other regime. If the electorate was permitted to exercise a truly effective control over the state, voting would be declared unlawful. Statists share the sentiment expressed by a pro-EU French politician who, after the voters rejection of that constitution, declared that this issue was too important and complex to be left to the electorate — who could not understand the intricacies of the constitution — and should be left to the professionals who knew what was best!

This same thinking permeates the American political system, although it has become institutionalized in the hands of the courts. If the voters should approve a referendum that is contrary to the interests of their political overlords, the courts may simply declare the outcome violative of some arcane interpretation of an abstract constitutional principle. This was seen, the other day, in the United States Supreme Court ruling that the use of marijuana for treating medical maladies was still illegal under federal law — despite having received widespread voter approval in various state referenda. That most voters never bother to question whether they — or a politically-appointed panel of jurists — should have final judgment on the legal policies of the state in an allegedly democratic system, attests to how well they have internalized their expected subservience to the ruling class.

The practice of "judicial review" — a power nowhere provided for in the United States Constitution — offers yet another clue. When, in *Marbury v. Madison*, an unelected Supreme Court usurped the authority to determine the constitutionality of legislation, the non-democratic nature of the American state was laid out for all to see. We should have learned then what Europeans are now experiencing: resort to popular voting is important only if the electorate do what their leaders want them to do!

Mencken understood what he called this "carnival of buncombe" as well as anyone has. Were he around today, I suspect he would still be trying to awaken the "boobeoisie" to the one-party nature of our ostensible two-party political system. While it is considered impolite (indeed, "impolitic") to look behind the curtains by which magicians carry out their illusions over us, we might nonetheless find it useful to ask this question: from what source arise the candidates for major offices from which we are to make our selection? Have you and your friends sat around dinner tables or your workplace and offered up to the political parties the names of people you would like to have run for the presidency? Or were these handed down to you by a well-scripted media offering the four or five fungible candidates from which you would be permitted to make choices in primary elections?

Did it never interest you that George W. Bush and John Kerry — both Yale grads, both members of Skull-and-Bones (a society that has produced presidents, cabinet members, supreme court justices, and numerous industrialists) — just happened to be the two candidates between whom you could barely fit a piece of thinly-sliced ham? Did you ever

have occasion to wonder how — and by whom — this amazing coincidence was brought about?

In pondering this question, you might also inquire into the recent trial balloon fueled by George Bush I when he declared that Jeb Bush might also make a good president. Responding to their well-rehearsed cue, some cable news networks began discussing such a possibility, . . . perhaps in time to start another establishment avalanche in New Hampshire for the next member of the imperial family.

In the background of such a future debate stands the ubiquitous Richard Cheney, a man of whom it is now being said that, should he run for and be elected to the presidency in 2008, he would become the first three-term president since FDR. The point of such humor will be lost on those who partake of the electronic autolobotomizing services of the Fox Snooze Channel, who will tell you that Cheney was only a vice-president! How faithfully do conditioned minds come to the defense of the creed.

The impending collapse of our politically-structured world just might take with it the structured mindset upon which it has been built. And within its rubble may be found the remains of the secular religion "democracy," whose catechisms are today preached from academic cathedrals and the media. In that day, perhaps, our archeological descendants may search the debris for an answer to the question our generation is too terrified to ask: by what justification do men and women organize to inflict violence upon their fellow humans?

The Best of Butler Shaffer

