

Democracy, from Greek Demos - people and Krates - rule, means Rule of the people. Not some of the people, but all the people. Ethics, we know, is the science of human duty. The science of right - moral science. Whether there are (or should be) Ethics in Democracy is with some, perhaps, only a point of view.

Ethics of Democracy would mean those considerations of morals and rights upon which Democracy must be founded and according to which it must be built to be right and just.

The democratic idea as applied to government demands that equality of fundamental rights be recognized as a natural endowment to be protected as a public duty.

If we grasp that great axiom upon which the legal right of self-defense is securely founded, the axiom that every man has a right to himself as against the aggressions of every other man, or of all other men combined; if we grasp that axiom, we have the key to all moral problems involving human rights and human duties.

That great principle "The Brotherhood of Man" is the Ethical touchstone of Democracy. The principle that there is but One God and all men are the sons of God, or if we prefer, that Nature is a unit and all men therefore an integral part of that unit, is a recognition of the fundamental law of social life.

The Declaration of Independence lays a correct basis for Democracy.

"We hold these truths to be self-evident; that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness; that to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.

The equality of all men is the tap-root of Democracy. Not equality in size, strength, intellect or will, but that all are endowed with equal rights, with unalienable rights among which are Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of happiness.

To secure these rights, says the Declaration, governments are instituted among men; deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.

No form of government has any right to coerce an individual regarding his individual concerns. Coercion of individuals in individual concerns is an invasion, an aggression and it does not cease to be such because the invader and aggressor is a government instead of another individual or a mob.

This is true of government by All, as of government by One.

Madison wrote: Justice is the end (aim) of government. It is the end of civil society. It ever has been and ever will be pursued until it be obtained or until Liberty be lost in the pursuit.

Individual rights do not arise in government. They are merely recognized (or ought to be) by government, and should be made secure by government. Men do not exist for government. Governments do exist for men.

Men are prior to government, and whatever rights they have inhere in them by reason of their very existence.

It is to make life easier and more secure that men form themselves into communities, and government is merely the orderly conduct of community affairs.

Whatever rights government has are the rights delegated to it by individuals. It has no rights to give or to grant.

Rights carry with them correlative duties. The assertion that men have equal rights, implies that they owe duties to correspond. The assertion that all have equal rights, is the equivalent of saying that each has a duty to respect the equal rights of all.

This principle is expressed by the Golden Rule "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them."

This principle is of Universal Application. It admits of no exceptions.

There are in human society two classes of rights - those pertaining to the individuals and those pertaining to the community.

Individual rights and duties are to be considered as if there were no community. They inhere and are complete in the individual. Every man, for instance has a right to live, etc.

Communal, or Community, rights and duties are those which attach to the community as a whole. It is the community as a whole, and not each individual that has the right, for example, to determine the locality or character of a highway, the terms of land tenure and the expenditure of the common income.

Self government implies that as to individual rights each individual shall govern himself in his own way, free from all governmental interference, upon the sole condition that he respect the equal rights of other individuals; and that as to communal rights, each individual shall have a voice, and that the majority vote shall be taken as the corporate expression. But even the majority vote cannot deprive the individual of his individual rights.

In democracy, individual liberty is the test of morality. Immorality as between man and man consists in the imposition of one man's will upon another. Conversely, Morality in democracy consists in practical recognition of the complete liberty of each, limited only by the equal liberty of all.

Acceptance of these principles must be more than verbal. Fully accepted, they preclude the recognition by government of chattel slavery. They preclude the recognition by government of any measures that lead to virtual slavery; they preclude therefore the recognition by government of any monopoly which tends to restrict or to prescribe the absolute equal right of all to life, to liberty and to the right to enjoy all the opportunities and privileges that the Earth offers to men.

Human labor is the rock bottom of economic research. Labor is economically self-existent. It has no prior cause on the economic plane. For labor is a technical term descriptive of the human family producing satisfactions for human desires. And while that phenomenon is indeed an effect (as what short of Omnipotence is not?) yet its cause lies beyond the field of economic inquiry. It is not an effect of anterior economic causes. On the economic plane it is itself the cause of all effects.

But labor cannot create. It cannot make something out of nothing. It cannot say "Let there be bread" and there is bread. Labor has only the power to produce. It can draw forth artificial objects by so adapting the matter and forces which nature supplies as to fit them for serving human purposes. It can change the shape and place of natural things.

But labor can produce nothing without natural resources. It needs the raw materials and working places upon the Earth. Or, to use the inclusive economic term, it needs "land". Land is the one thing, the only thing, that labor must have and cannot make. Land is the sole condition of all economic processes that labor generates. Labor without land would be utterly powerless to generate the economic processes, - - indeed, without land life would be impossible.

Land and labor are both fundamental. They are the prime factors of all economic processes; labor being the initial, or active, force and land the responsive or passive condition. Thus labor produces wealth from land, and land yields wealth to labor.

Land, labor and wealth, then are the three subjects of first importance in all economic problems.

Wealth is labor in tangible form. It is stored-up labor. Therefore, when producers or workers exchange among themselves the wealth they have produced they are really exchanging one man's labor for another man's labor.

When you buy a loaf of bread at the store what is it you are really buying. The land had to be ploughed and seeded, the mill had to be built and managed; the flour had to be baked and the oven had to be built -- to say nothing of all the other handling and transportation that took place. Bread therefore is the embodiment of all the different kinds of services which made and brought it there.

All these things are products of labor and in exchanging them we are exchanging service for service, work for work.

Nor do these things last, they are quickly consumed or tend to disintegrate so that they must be continually produced and re-produced.

Therefore civilization of today does not rest upon the saved-up products of earlier generations, but upon interchanges of services in this generation, and to a great extent in this year, this month, or week or day.

It is often explained that the idle rich are living upon the accumulated savings of their ancestors.

Service cannot be saved - even when in tangible form it can be saved only for a little while.

Society lives almost literally from hand to mouth.

But individuals can and do save obligations to work. And this is what is meant by saving wealth.

Nor is such saving necessarily incompatible with the principle of service for service.

The essential thing is that when a service is rendered, it shall be in exchange for an equivalent service, whether the equivalent service be rendered concurrently, or has been rendered in the past, or is to be rendered in the future. This is what constitutes service for service.

Civilization rests securely only on interchange of work. Service for service is the condition of civilized life. It is the central law of social development. Though men may live without serving, it is only through some degree of interchange of service that they can live civilized lives. The more perfect the interchange both in its economic and moral qualities, the higher the civilization.

To be equal and just, Exchange or trade or the rendering or accepting of service must be upon a basis of equal exchange. It is unjust to get without giving or to give without getting. Justice in trade is the exchange of equivalents; it is economic equilibrium.

Before anyone can give he must own what he gives. It must be his against all the rest of the world. It must be morally his. No one can give or sell or exchange what is not his own.

Social Ethics must rest upon Justice.

Nature gives nothing to any man excepting in return for exertion -- in reward for labor.

Labor, or production, then is the natural justification for ownership. Whatever a man produces is his. Whatever he receives from other producers in exchange for what he has produced is also his, for as other producers have a like title to their property by token of their production they have a right to exchange it.

No man or set of men (not even the government) has a right to deprive a man of what he has made, or of any part of what he has made.

Upon these foundations of Human Rights and Human Equality are Ethics and Justice in Democracy founded and only upon these foundations can an enduring structure of Democracy be built.

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