



ONCE AGAIN, THE DEMON IN DEMOCRACY

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By "resistance" or "opposition" what is meant is the need to combat egalitarianism. Lest anyone doubt where I stand on this subject, let me say that I agree [with Ryszard Legutko's contention](#) that the demon is in democracy itself. Thinkers since Plato and Aristotle have noted that democracy places a premium on equality; and once believing democrats are in the saddle, the questions then center on how far and in what ways these doctrinaires will push their highest value.

In old-fashioned forms of popular government, like the Swiss cantons and early America, the dangers of democracy were largely contained. Although political leaders had to be elected, the franchise was limited to male property-owners, who fulfilled residence and sometimes religious requirements. Functioning political entities by modern standards were also spatially quite restricted; and even local governments that belonged to larger nation states or empires were largely self-governing, while almost all public affairs were addressed by citizens or their representatives, who were personally known to their voters.

We have moved from that model of popular government to a more radically egalitarian form in which people no longer govern themselves. Large administrative states look after "populations," not "citizens," and public administrators and their collaborators in the media and state educational system socialize us and redistribute our earnings based on what they consider to be "equity" or "fairness." Anyone who wanders into a country, which is now reduced to an administrative district in an ever-expanding supranational state, is almost instantly eligible for social programs, and will be eventually enfranchised to vote.

The present requirement for being a democracy is no longer simply letting everyone and his cousin vote in periodic election rituals. Being properly "democratic" also obliges the subject to campaign for special recognition for feminists, homosexuals and the transgendered. A lack of openness to this newest wrinkle in "being democratic" disqualifies popularly elected governments, like Victor Orban's Hungarian government, from being accepted into the supposed community of the virtuous. Further, "being democratic" compels good democrats to condemn white Euro-American Christians for not having treated other groups as equals. The recent craze for Critical Race Theory in the US and the anticolonial and Islamophilic instruction in Europe are both examples of onetime Western countries turning toward a politics of self-debasement.

Although I would not deny that other circumstances have contributed to this result, it would be remiss

of an historian not to notice the quest for a more perfectly realized equality as a political ideal. The destruction of traditional hierarchies, including gender distinctions, and the war on ethnic and cultural distinctness in Western, onetime Christian, nations has progressed entirely in the name of equality. Quite properly serious democrats, particularly those who view themselves as engaged in unfinished work, wish to overcome past inequalities, and have empowered government administrators and educators to help in this task.

Some political thinkers, like Alexis de Tocqueville and Bertrand de Jouvenel, have argued that democracy can be rendered more tolerable through countervailing forces that will hold in check democracy's leveling tendencies. This theory goes as far back as Aristotle's *Politics* (Book Three), in which the Greek philosopher argues that a stable form of democracy tends toward a "mixed regime." This is a quasi-democracy in which oligarchic and possibly other elements may and should be introduced to keep the have-nots from despoiling those of means with better education.

In my study of bourgeois liberalism and its dissolution, *After Liberalism*, I deal with similar efforts made by liberal thinkers in the nineteenth century to keep "the river god" of egalitarianism from destroying the inherited civilization. This holding action has worked only in the short and middle term. Countervailing forces like local hierarchies and patriarchal families allowed Western countries to hold back the rising ideological tide for a few generations, but eventually the principle of democratic equality swept all before it.

Although used as an exercise of control, the final goal, if there is one, is never achieved. Today we have deeply entrenched, increasingly totalitarian elites that pay homage to the ideal of equality but are far from practicing it. In view of the inevitable cognitive and social differences among human beings, this failure to achieve egalitarian standards for everyone should surprise no one. Nor should we be astonished that the more affluent the neighborhood the more likely one is to encounter BLM signs on the lawns of those who have no dealings with blacks, except as maids and lawn maintenance workers.

An alliance has been formed between the political class, corporate heads, elite universities and high-tech and the underclass, in which the wealthy and powerful dominate. How, one might ask, does this arrangement lead to more equality among citizens? Obviously, it doesn't; but the people in charge of our system appeal unceasingly to the ideal of equality, just as Charlemagne and Louis IX claimed to be fighting for the Christian faith, or the Turkish Sultans for the teachings of the Koran.

Moreover, an elite that dominates us in the name of a more perfect democratic equality will likely be more radical and less restrained than its predecessor in carrying out its supposedly righteous agenda. It is not working to keep in place the social order or our constitutionally guaranteed freedoms. Our elites are striving to obliterate what they tell us was an unjust past and to build a more homogeneous world.

Meanwhile we'll have to put up with the wrecking crews tearing down historical monuments and the ideologues who are rewriting our history and controlling our speech. These are supposedly small prices to pay for the achievement of "equity;" that is, a more perfect equality, in pursuit of which most of us are reduced to drones.

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The [featured images](#) shows, "What happens to America?" by Marco Melgrati; painted in 2016.

