

# Real Democracy's Need Is Discipline of Youth

## A Land Where Responsibility Harmonizes with Freedom, Not a Mere Paradise for Children Without Sense of Obligation

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**E**VERY one of us must now recognize that the war—up to these last days regarded by many men as a purposeless riot of murder—means the final triumph of democracy; that in bloodshed and pain is the promise of a new beauty, the hope of a new age, when the right of each man to the full measure of his humanity cannot be denied. Most men think of democracy in terms of freedom. They see in democracy unlimited opportunity for self-development. They feel themselves freed in a democracy from oppressive checks and circumscribing disciplines.

But democracy is more than freedom. It is also obligation. The essential fact of democracy is this: that a people work out their own salvation from within. A democratic people, assuming entire responsibility for their actions, take upon themselves the heavy duty of standing by their own light without help from King or Kaiser. The sole guide of a democracy is the inner sense of a mass of people. A democracy is always facing that trying situation which an individual often faces, when a man must alone, taking counsel of his own spirit, make a far-reaching decision, a decision which he cannot excuse, and for which he must bear the entire responsibility.

The directing power of a democracy, then, is the collective spirit within its own heart, a spirit tenuous and elastic, terribly dangerous because it is so vague and unhampered. The danger of democracy is never that it will be too stern, too rigid, too intellectual, too conservative. No, the danger of democracy is that it will be too easygoing, too soft, too emotional, too fickle. The heart of democracy is at bottom kind, gentle, good, and trusting. The virtues of democracy are the virtues of a good family man. That is why a democracy is so easily imposed upon by grafters.

The weaknesses of democracy show nowhere more clearly than in its attitude toward youth. We see that attitude here in America. Our country is the paradise of youth; here we think only of our duties toward our children, never of our children's duties toward us. An Ameri-

can works himself to death for his children—happy not in their respect and their love, but in their success. Everything is done for the American youth. Look at his education. Schooling is free from the kindergarten through the university. The State taxes itself willingly that its boys and girls may have the best education which it can give them. And what does it ask in return? A sense of responsibility? A sense of gratitude? Service in the army? Service in civil life? No. It asks nothing in return. It is pathetically proud of the advantages its youth enjoy, never once realizing this fundamental danger: If you train up young people to be soft and luxurious, to expect everything as a right and to give nothing in return, to absorb unthinkingly all the advantages of civilization without adding anything to those advantages, are you training up young people who can help in the great decisions of a democracy?

No. The democracy which does not recognize its problem, which does not recognize that opportunity, wealth, expansion, material happiness, and material satisfaction are but fair and beautiful signs of decay unless balanced and tempered by discipline and right direction; a democracy which does not realize this fundamental fact is already lost. Woe unto a democracy which does not sternly hold up an ideal of discipline as well as an ideal of opportunity!

Now it must be remembered that not all disciplines are the same. The discipline of a band of Cossacks, the discipline of autocracy, all discipline of outer authority, all discipline which man accepts in loathing of spirit and abhorrent fear, such discipline is not good, but evil.

The discipline of war, even of a war which men enter clear-eyed and fearless, is not good, but evil. However the bloody sacrifice of war may have purged the souls of England and France, so that men are new-minted by fire, we cannot look upon war in itself as anything but evil.

No, an outer mechanical discipline is a vicious thing. A democracy must develop an inner, vital, intuitive discipline which will serve as a check upon and direction to impulse and expansion, which

will not destroy energy and initiative, but will guide them with an inner light.

If it be true that the sole guide of a democracy is its inner sense of truth and right, it certainly follows that the central problem of democracy is the training of that inward sense in the right way. An autocracy has no need of education except in unquestioning obedience, but the very life of a democracy is measured by the power with which it teaches each new generation to profit by the mistakes and the progress of the old. The central problem of democracy is an educational problem; by education, formal and informal, it must raise its youth to a higher plane than has yet been reached, that its power of maintaining itself superior to the forces that are constantly trying to do its thinking for it may never slacken.

What is needed? We must have an educational force powerful enough to build up in youth a union of imaginative power, spiritual insight, sympathy, and energy, combined with judgment, proportion, good sense, restraint, and wisdom of direction. Observe that I say union, not mere combination. It is easy to have sympathy and energy; it is easy to have judgment and restraint. It is easy to lay the intellectual virtues beside the emotional virtues. But to interpenetrate one with the other, to fuse one with the other, to have sympathy restrained and ordered by good sense, to have emotion bounded and directed by a sense of law, to have wisdom in the heart of energy and enthusiasm—here is the miracle of civilization, the achievement of which costs every ounce of intellectual effort which man can bring to the treasure heap. To free one's self from the restraint of outer authority is not hard, but to make one's new freedom subject to the shaping and guiding power of inner law is the supreme achievement of the human will.

A grave danger is that men will attempt to solve the problem of democracy by mere humanitarian materialism. One must, of course, recognize that the humanitarian spirit is necessary to democracy, so necessary, indeed, that to attack even its extreme forms is seemingly to undermine the very foundations of democracy. Moreover, no man whose heart is in the right place wants to be connected with the new group of reac-

tionaries who indiscriminately attack all kinds of charity as vicious alike to the giver and the receiver. The fact is that our economic system is only a makeshift full of kinks and rifts which somebody must straighten and patch. The task is hard and thankless, and all of us must give our full tribute of honor to those men and women whose unrewarded energies have been expended making just the unjust and in making right the wrong. The danger which I am pointing out is not sympathy, and kindness, and charitable action; it is the exaltation of the humanitarian virtues into a social philosophy. I cannot believe that the measure of democracy is its success in keeping the poor and unfortunate out of almshouses and asylums.

The Biblical passages which exalt goodness and mercy and justice have too often been misinterpreted to mean negative, passive goodness and mercy and justice. Too often they have been misinterpreted to mean an exaltation, from the mouth of God, of the bourgeois virtues. Now the bourgeois virtues are eminently desirable and respectable, but they have no intellectual quality, they have no insight, they have no beauty, and the view of life which dwells at the centre of democracy must have power and insight and beauty. "My religion is to do right and live right and be charitable"—noble and beautifully simple words if their meaning is noble and beautifully simple; but alas! when one looks at the man who says them, too often one feels that they are the savorless catch-words of a shallow humanitarian materialism.

One can build up the discipline of democracy only by genuine idealism. By idealism I do not mean mere blind yearning for good, while the forces of evil actually hold the field. The only genuine idealism is the belief, resting upon conviction and not upon mere feeling, that it is possible for men to impose upon the contradictory phenomena of their lives an ordered, intelligent plan, the centre of which is law, but law magnetized by magnificent humanity. Upon such idealism education can build a structure which will give democracy that which democracy must have—a sense of law, a sense of responsibility, an ordered and restrained freedom.