

Inclusive Democracy

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Nowadays very few people believe in the benefits of democracy as it is: the right to vote in a stated date, with certainty that the civic vote will be counted and respected, that is to say, the American-democratic style, designed to choose “the most natural” candidate --a “naturalness” similar to Hollywood make-up and a result of millions of dollars paid to Madison Avenue agencies. The same “most natural” candidate who is advised by public relations managers and who repeats what the voters want to listen and who appears wearing casual clothes to make us believe that s/he is an ordinary citizen as the rest of us, at least during the period of the campaign.

Greek philosophers are to blame for our limited concept of democracy: self-absorbed as they were admiring the democracy of their citi-States and their agoras they transmitted us the concept without worrying themselves to analyse deeply all the possible questions associated with the subject. However, with the passage of time, we have discovered the relationship that this universal political form has with the topics of poverty, the environment, economic opportunities, access to education and the equal dissemination of new technologies. Today, in the mid of the collapse of socialism and the enthronement of neoliberalism, we have to turn more frequently to the democratic principle to use it as a bridge between the cynicism of the market and social justice. This has resulted in the ‘Third Way’ proposals, in “capitalism with a human face” or, more recently, the inclusive democracy, to somehow compensate for the damage caused by the deregulation of the markets, the concentration of wealth caused by privatisation and the effects of fiscal reforms that inevitably favour the wealthier groups.

In the third Summit of the Americas, Hugo Chávez noted that he accepted, under protest, a democratic clause to be included by member-countries in the final declaration, provided that the democratic level of American countries was to be measured according to the “participative” democracy approach rather than the “representative” democracy approach. This distinction, (criticised by some people mainly because it was coming from an indicative example of a ruler who wanted to perpetuate himself in power), is consistent with the concept of the inclusive democracy proposed, among others, by Takis Fotopoulos. According to Fotopoulos, neoliberal doctrine supported by representative democracy has resulted in a polarised society - an extremely poor class and an extremely privileged one: the former subsisting in favelas, bidonvilles, slums and cardboard houses, and the latter in luxurious guetos with electrified fences, private police, security alarms and attack dogs. The poor, a majority, despairingly live to the margin of the democratic process, while the privileged are not interested at all in national politics, as their true economic interests are “protected” in the vaults of international banking. The middle class, the silent majority, the so-called “civil society” are the only ones who are left at the mercy of the electoral cynicism.

Those in favour of the inclusive democracy affirm that it is necessary to invent a new

politics since the globalisation has discredited the traditional politics when it knocked down the national frontiers and has nullified the capacity of the State to solve the fundamental problems of poverty, unemployment, the growing concentration of the economic power and the destruction of the environment. Anthony Giddens, one of the main precursors of the Third Way in his recent work "The third way and their critics", first stresses the urgent necessity to distinguish between citizens and consumers, as the markets neither create nor sustain ethical values, "which can only be legitimized through the democratic dialogue", but then, the director of the London School of Economics falls in the original sin of the Third Way (the inevitability of the market) when affirming that no well-known alternative exists to the market economy: "markets don't create the citizenship, but they can contribute to create it and even to reduce inequality". On the other hand, those in favour of the inclusive democracy insist that the solution to the problem of the concentration of political and economic power will never be found in the system that created this problem: the market economy obsessed with growth. Hence, the necessity of a new democratic pact.

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