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Liberal and Socialist "Democracies" versus Inclusive Democracy

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ABSTRACT: The transnational elite (and the leading power in it, USA) abuses and distorts the word 'democracy' for its aim to stabilise the New World Order (NWO), which —through its main institutions, the internationalised market economy and representative 'democracy'— secures the huge and growing concentration of political and economic power at the hands of a few elites, all over the world. The aim of this paper is to show that both multi-party liberal democracy which is supported by the NWO, as well as socialist single-party democracy supported by the few remaining socialist countries like Cuba, are forms of representative and statist democracy, which take for granted the separation of society from state and the economy and as such can not be the basis for an Inclusive Democracy aiming to integrate society with economy and polity as well as with Nature.

Tom Crumpacker's (T.C.) paper "Democracy and the multiparty political system"[1] raises certain important issues on the meaning of democracy, politics, political parties and representation, not only with respect to Cuba, which is his main reference, but also with respect to liberal and socialist democracy in general. It would therefore be worthwhile to examine these issues again and attempt to show that, although T.C.'s critique of capitalist 'democracy' is valid, the alternative socialist democracy which he supports does not, also, meet the requirements of a true democracy, despite the fact that it is a superior system than the capitalist system in meeting the basic needs of all people rather than those of some privileged classes.

1. Freedom, democracy and politics

The starting point in an examination of the concepts of democracy and politics is the crucial concept of freedom which underlies them. In contrast to the 'negative' conception of freedom adopted by liberals, which refers to the absence of restraint, that is, the freedom for the individual to do whatever s/he wants to do ('freedom from'), both socialists and supporters of the Inclusive Democracy (ID) project adopt a 'positive' conception of freedom, which refers to the freedom 'to do things', to engage in self-development or participate in the government of one's society ('freedom to'). Furthermore, the Inclusive Democracy project takes a further step in concretizing the 'positive' meaning of freedom by defining it in terms of individual and collective autonomy.[2]

The universalisation of the capitalist market system in the New World Order and of the liberal representative 'democracy', the political complement of the market economy, has inevitably led to a corresponding universalisation of the negative conception of freedom.

This development became unavoidable by the dismantling of actually existing socialism in East Europe and the corresponding collapse of statism, as well as of socialism as an ideology and political practice that relied on a positive conception of freedom. So, the negative conception of freedom is today adopted, directly or indirectly, not only by liberals, neoliberals and the like but also by the presently dominant reformist Left (ex social democrats who today moved towards various forms of social-liberalism, post Marxists, post-modernists and the like) and even most anarchists, particularly in the Anglo-Saxon world.

However, as I attempted to show elsewhere[3] there is no intrinsic relationship between the positive concept of freedom and the 'statist' form of democracy, i.e. the form of democracy in which the state is separated from society and is supposed to express, through a process of representation, the general will. In fact, a statist form of democracy is incompatible with any concept of freedom, positive or negative, given its fundamental incompatibility with both self-determination and (individual and collective) autonomy. And yet, both the liberal and the socialist forms of democracy have always been statist, namely, they presupposed a society separate from the state. Furthermore, in both the liberal and socialist forms of democracy, society has always been separate from the economy: in the former case, the capitalist minority, which owns and/or controls (through the market system) the means of production, takes all important decisions about allocation of resources in a scarcity economy whereas, in the latter case, the socialist minority of the vanguard party, which controls (through the planning system) the means of production, takes all corresponding allocation decisions.

The separation of society from the state implies that democracy can only be a representative one, i.e. people do not take directly, through face-to-face assemblies, all important decisions affecting their lives but, instead, have to elect, every four or five years, 'representatives', who are supposed to express the voters' own will. It matters therefore little, as far as the democratic expression of people's will is concerned, whether these representatives are elected by voters whose voting behaviour is conditioned by a capitalist system characterised by an unequal distribution of economic (and, consequently, political) power, the capitalist-controlled mass media and a multi-party system, or whether it is conditioned instead by a socialist system, characterised by an unequal distribution of political (and, consequently, economic) power, the party-controlled mass media and a single-party system. In both cases, it is minorities which concentrate at their hands political and economic power, excluding the vast majority of the population from any effective decision-making on crucial matters affecting their own lives.

Having said this, it would be a serious error to put in the same bag the capitalist and the socialist type of 'democracy' (or, even worse, to put in a better light the former against the latter, as Chomsky[4] does) and forget the fundamental differences between the two types of statist democracy, the capitalist and the socialist one. The capitalist market system cannot secure the satisfaction even of the basic needs of all citizens. As long as the allocation of scarce resources is left to the market, this means that even basic needs like food, housing, health and education, can be covered in a satisfactory way only by people who have enough purchasing power to meet these needs. Given however the inequality in the distribution of income and wealth that is a built-in element of any capitalist market economy —an inequality which grows bigger the fewer the social controls on markets, as it is the case in liberal and neoliberal economies— people in the upper social classes can more than meet

their needs (basic and non-basic), whereas people in the lower social classes struggle to survive and meet even their basic needs. On the other hand, a socialist planned economy not only can secure a much smaller degree of inequity at the same level of development as a capitalist market economy —as even orthodox economic research has shown—[5] but it can also prioritise the basic needs of its citizens and shift as many resources as possible to sectors meeting these needs. This could explain the 'paradox' that Cuba, a country at a much level of development than advanced capitalist countries like the USA, meets much better the basic needs of its citizens than them![6]

Similarly, it can be shown that when social democracy was at its height during the statist period of modernity (from the end of the second world war and up to the mid '70s or so) social controls on the market economy could also secure a very high level of employment, a better distribution of income, a significant improvement of health, education and welfare services etc. However, as I showed elsewhere[7], this type of statism within the market economy was a historical aberration, the outcome of an exceptional balance of power at the international as well as the domestic level in advanced capitalist countries, due to the vast expansion of the socialist camp following the end of the Second World War, and also due to a parallel and similarly huge expansion of the traditional working class (which could be explained by a series of technological and economic reasons) and of the unions and political parties supported by it. Therefore, the present dominance of neoliberal globalisation which characterises the present phase of modernity does not represent just a change in policy, or the betrayal of social democratic parties, as the reformist Left argues, but a systemic change due to a radical transformation of both the 'objective' and 'subjective' conditions shaping the outcome of the social struggle[8].

2. Representative versus direct democracy

After this brief introduction, let us consider in more detail the liberal, the socialist and the ID conceptions of democracy and politics, highlighting the fundamental differences between them. As I mentioned above, the main characteristic of both liberal and socialist type of 'democracy', which differentiated it from both the classical definition of democracy as well as the concept of Inclusive Democracy, is that both liberal and socialist democracies are forms of representative 'democracy'.

The idea of representation entered the political lexicon during the sixteenth century, although the sovereignty of Parliament was not established until the seventeenth century. In the same way that the king had once 'represented' society as a whole, it was now the turn of Parliament to play this role, although sovereignty itself was still supposed to belong to the people as a whole. In fact, the doctrine that has prevailed in Europe, since the French revolution, was not just that the French people were sovereign and that their views were represented in the National Assembly, but that the French nation was sovereign and the National Assembly embodied the will of the nation. As it was observed:[9]

> this was a turning point in continental European ideas since, before this, the political representative had been viewed in the continent as a delegate. According to the new theory promulgated by the French revolutionaries ... the elected representative is viewed as an independent maker of national laws and policies, not as an agent for his constituents or for sectional interests.

One may go further and say that the form of liberal 'democracy' that has dominated the West in the last two centuries or so is not even a representative 'democracy' but a representative *government*, that is a government of the people *by* their representatives. Thus, as Bhikhu Parekh[10] points out:

> Representatives were to be elected by the people, but once elected they were to remain free to manage public affairs as they saw fit. This highly effective way of insulating the government against the full impact of universal franchise lies at the heart of liberal democracy. Strictly speaking liberal democracy is not representative *democracy* but representative *government*.

Still, liberal philosophers not only took for granted the separation of the state apparatus from society but saw democracy as a way of bridging the gap between state and society. The bridging role was supposed to be played by representative 'democracy', a system whereby the plurality of political parties would provide an adequate forum for competing interests and systems of values.

However, as Hannah Arendt[11] stressed, in any kind of representative 'democracy', (both of the liberal or socialist type), the age-old distinction between ruler and ruled asserts itself again once more. This is because:

> the people are not admitted to the public realm, once more the business of government becomes the privilege of the few.... the result is that the people must either sink into lethargy, the forerunner of death to the public liberty, or preserve the spirit of resistance to whatever government they have elected, since the only power they retain is the 'reserve power of revolution'."

Liberal 'democracy'

The liberal conception of democracy is based on the negative conception of freedom and a corresponding conception of human rights. From these definitions, and a world-view which sees human nature as atomistic and human beings as rational agents whose existence and interests are ontologically prior to society, a number of principles follows about the constitution of society: political egalitarianism; freedom of citizens —as competitors— to realise their capabilities at the economic level; separation of the private realm of freedom from the public realm. Clearly, the above liberal principles about the constitution of society imply a form of democracy where the state is separate from the economy and the market.

It is therefore not surprising that none of the founders of classical liberalism was an advocate of democracy, in the sense of direct democracy, let alone inclusive democracy. In fact, the opposite was the case. For instance, the American Founding Fathers Madison and Jefferson were sceptical of democracy, precisely because of its Greek connotation of direct rule. So, liberal representative 'democracy' can be seen not as a bridge between state and society, as supporters of political liberalism assert, but as a form of statist democracy, whose main aim is the exclusion of the vast majority of the population from political power.

The emergence of liberal representative democracy in the last quarter of the 18th century when the 'Founding Fathers' of the US constitution, literally invented representative 'democracy' —an idea without any historical precedent in the ancient world— is indicative of this aim. Up to that time, democracy has had the classical Athenian meaning of the sovereignty of *demos*, in the sense of the direct exercise of power by all citizens —although,

of course, the Athenian democracy was partial, given the narrow definition of citizenship it adopted which excluded the majority of the population (women, slaves, emigrants). The Founding Fathers considered as completely unacceptable this direct exercise of power, ostensibly, because it was supposed to institutionalise the power of the 'mob' and the tyranny of the majority. In fact, however, their real aim was the dilution of popular power, so that the claims of representative 'democracy' about equal distribution of political power could be made compatible with the dynamic of the market economy, which was already leading to a concentration of economic power in the hands of an economic elite.[12]

It should also be noted here that the introduction of representative 'democracy' had nothing to do with the size of the population. The Founding Fathers' argument, as Wood [13] points out, 'was not that representation is necessary in a large republic, but, on the contrary, that a large republic is desirable so that representation is unavoidable'. Therefore, the Federalist conception of representation, and particularly that of Hamilton, was intended to act as a filter, i.e. as the very antithesis of *isegoria,* which means *equality of speech* —a necessary requirement of classical democracy— as against the representative 'democracy"s *freedom of speech*. This way, democracy ceased to be the exercise of political power and was identified instead with the resignation from it and the associated transfer of this power, through the elections, to a political elite.

Therefore, the more or less simultaneous institutionalisation of the system of the market economy and representative 'democracy', during the Industrial Revolution in the West, introduced the fundamental element of modernity: the formal separation of society from the economy and the state that has been ever since the basis of modernity. Not only were people unable, as direct producers, to control the product of their work but they were, also, incapable, as citizens, to directly exercise political power. In other words, the market economy and representative democracy had in fact institutionalised the unequal distribution of political and economic power among citizens. Furthermore, it could be shown that the gradual extension of the right to citizeship to the vast majority of the population —a process that was completed only in the tewntieth centurydid not offset the effective loss of the meaning of citizenship, in terms of the exercise of power. Thus, the type of citizenship introduced by representative democracy was a passive citizenship which had nothing to do with the active citizenship of classical democracy. It was therefore not surprising that the extension of civil rights did not have any marked effect in reducing the concentration of political and economic power which has always characterised modern society, apart from a temporary effect on economic inequality during the statist phase of modernity, as we shall see next.

At the ideological level, political liberalism emphasised the value of individual liberty and the rights of the individual against the state, whereas economic liberalism emphasised the value of a self-regulating market and consequently of laissez-faire and free trade. However, one should not confuse liberalism, or, neoliberalism today, with laissez-faire. It was the state itself that created the system of self-regulating markets and, furthermore, some form of state intervention has always been necessary for the smooth functioning of the market economy system. Unlike the fashionable recent theories of supporters of 'radical democracy', which like to separate political from economic liberalism in order to support the former unconditionally and at the same time keep some distance from the latter, as I attempted to show elsewhere,[14] the fact that political and economic liberalism have always been inseparable is not a historical accident. The marketization of the economy, i.e. the

long-term trend of lifting any effective social controls on the market for the protection of labour and the environment was based on the ideal of a 'free' (from state controls and restrictions) individual.

Socialist 'democracy'

The starting point in the socialist conception of democracy is a critique of the liberal conception of democracy. The critique is based on the fact that the liberal conception takes for granted the separation of the political from the economic realm and therefore, in effect, protects and legitimises the huge inequalities to which the market economy inevitably leads. In other words, the liberal democracy, even if it is supposed to secure an equal distribution of political power (which it certainly does not since it inevitably leads to the creation of a political elite of professional politicians who run the State) it still bypasses the crucial issue of distribution of economic power. The question therefore arises of economic democracy, i.e. of an institutional arrangement which would secure, for every citizen, an equal say in economic decision-making.

The answer traditionally given to this question by socialists can be classified, broadly speaking, in terms of the social democratic and the Marxist-Leninist conceptions of democracy. The social democratic conception is essentially a version of the liberal conception. In other words, social democracy consists of a 'liberal democracy' element, in the sense of a statist and representative form of democracy based on a market economy, and an 'economic democracy' element, in the sense of a strong welfare state and the state commitment to implement full employment policies. However, the social-democratic conception of democracy has been abandoned by social-democratic parties all over the world which have dropped the 'economic democracy' element of their conception of democracy. As a result, the social-democratic conception of democracy is now virtually indistinguishable from the liberal one, and rightly could be called 'social-liberalism'.

Setting therefore aside the traditional social-democratic conception, let us examine the Marxist-Leninist conception. My argument is that, appearances to the contrary notwithstanding, this conception is clearly a statist conception of democracy. In this conception, democracy is not differentiated from the state for the entire historical period which separates capitalism from communism, that is, for the entire period that is called the 'realm of necessity', when scarcity leads to class antagonisms which make inevitable class dictatorships of one kind or another. In this view, socialism will simply replace the dictatorship of one class, the bourgeoisie, by that of another, the proletariat. Thus, for Marx: [15]

> Between capitalist and communist society lies the period of the revolutionary transformatio of the one into another. Corresponding to this is also a political transition period in which the state can be nothing but the *revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat*.

Also, according to Lenin,[16] "Democracy is also a state and consequently democracy will also disappear when the state disappears. Revolution alone can 'abolish' the bourgeois state. The state in general, i.e. the most complete democracy can only 'wither away'." He then goes on to stress that the state (and democracy) will wither away only when "people have become so accustomed to observing the fundamental rules of social intercourse and

when their labour becomes so productive that they will voluntarily work according to their ability ... there will then be no need for society to regulate the quantity of products to be received by each; each will take freely according to his needs[17].... from the moment all members of society, or even only the vast majority have learned to administer the state themselves ... the need for government of any kind begins to disappear altogether ... for when all have learned to administer and actually do independently administer social production, independently keep accounts and exercise control over the idlers, etc.... the necessity of observing the simple fundamental rules of human intercourse will very soon become a habit".[18]

It is therefore obvious that in this worldview, a non-statist conception of democracy is inconceivable, both at the transitional stage leading to communism and at the higher phase of communist society: in the former, because the realm of necessity makes necessary a statist form of democracy where political and economic power is not shared among all citizens but only among members of the proletariat; in the latter, because when we reach the realm of freedom, no form of democracy at all is necessary, since no significant decisions will have to be made! Thus, at the economic level, scarcity and the division of labour will by then have disappeared, and therefore there will be no need for any significant economic decisions to be taken about the allocation of resources. Also, at the political level, the administration of things will have replaced the administration of people, and therefore there will be no need for any significant political decisions to be taken either.

However, the Marxist abolition of scarcity depends on an objective definition of 'needs', which is neither feasible, nor —from the democratic point of view— desirable. It is not feasible because, even if basic needs may be assumed finite and independent of time and place, the same cannot be said about their satisfiers (i.e., the form or the means by which these needs are satisfied), let alone non-basic needs. It is not desirable because, in a democratic society, an essential element of freedom is choice as regards the ways in which needs are formed and satisfied. So, the communist stage of post-scarcity is in fact a mythical state of affairs, (if needs and scarcity are defined objectively) and reference to it could simply be used (and has been used) to justify the indefinite maintenance of state power and power relations and structures. It is therefore obvious that, within the problematique of the democracy project, the link between post-scarcity and freedom should be broken. The abolition of scarcity and, consequently, of the division of labour is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for democracy and the ascent of man from the kingdom of necessity to the kingdom of freedom should be de-linked from the economic process. Still, from Aristotle, through Locke and Marx, to Arendt, the distinction between the 'realm of necessity' (where nature belongs) and the 'realm of freedom' has always been considered to be fundamental. However, although this distinction may be useful as a *conceptual tool* in classifying human activities, there is no reason why the two realms must be seen as mutually exclusive in social reality. Historically, there have been several occasions when various degrees of freedom survived under conditions that could be characterised as belonging to the 'realm of necessity'. Furthermore, once we cease treating the two realms as mutually exclusive, there is no justification for any attempt to dominate Nature —an important element of Marxist growth ideology— in order to enter the realm of freedom.

In conclusion, there are no material preconditions of freedom. The entrance to the realm of freedom does not depend on any 'objective' factors, like the arrival of the mythical state of

affairs of material abundance. The level of development of productive forces that is required, so that material abundance for the entire population on Earth can be achieved, makes it at least doubtful that such a stage could ever be reached without serious repercussions to the environment —unless, of course, 'material abundance' is defined democratically (and not 'objectively') in a way which is consistent with ecological balance. By the same token, the entrance to the realm of freedom does not depend on a massive change of consciousness through the adoption of some form of spiritualistic dogma, as some deep ecologists and other spiritualistic movements propose. Therefore, neither capitalism and socialism, on the 'objective' side, nor the adoption of some kind of spiritualistic dogma, on the 'subjective' side, constitute historical preconditions to enter the realm of freedom.

On the basis of this problematique, the socialist democracy in Cuba described by T.C., first, cannot qualify as political democracy since it is clearly both a statist and representative kind of 'democracy'. As such, it can hardly be classified as democracy for the reasons mentioned above. Irrespective of the decisive role in the political process played by the president and the communist party, the very fact that all political institutions are representative and that the elites controlling the state machine inevitably concentrate at their hands all effective political power is clearly incompatible with a real democracy. Second, it cannot qualify as an economic democracy, since it is based on a centrally planned economy with elements of a market economy and-- as we have seen above-- neither the former nor the latter could secure the integration of economy to society. This is because it is political elites, as well as the newly emerging economic elites, which take all important economic decisions rather than the citizens' and producers' assemblies, as in an inclusive democracy. However, although Cuba cannot qualify as a genuine democracy one should not ignore that there are significant democratic elements in its political structure, as, for instance, the element of recallability that is recognised by some Cubanese institutions (e.g. the elected National Assembly may recall judges at any time), or the recognition that politics is not an activity for the 'experts' or the professional politicians but for the ordinary citizen. Last, but not least, there is no question that the average citizen of Cuba enjoys a much better standard of living and conditions of work than the average citizen of Latin America, as it becomes evident by any comparison of the relative security of employment and the 'social wage' (the boosting of real income in terms of social services) of the former with respect to the latter. This, despite the US's elite bestial embargo against the island for decades!

However, we could perhaps form a better idea of the true meaning of democracy if we examined its requirements —our next task.

The requirements of an Inclusive Democracy

Democracy should be seen as irreconcilable with any form of inequity in the distribution of power, that is, with any concentration of power, political, social or economic. Consequently, democracy is incompatible with commodity and property relations, which inevitably lead to concentration of power. Similarly, it is incompatible with hierarchical structures implying domination, either institutionalised (e.g., domination of women by men), or "objective" (e.g., domination of the South by the North in the framework of the market division of labour), and the implied notion of dominating the natural world. Finally, democracy is fundamentally incompatible with any closed system of beliefs,

dogmas, or ideas. So, democracy has nothing to do with the present dominant liberal conception of it, nor with the various conceptions of the ideal society which are grounded on religion, spiritualism, or irrational beliefs and dogmas.

The conception of inclusive democracy that forms the core of the proposed new liberatory project, is a new conception, which, using as a starting point the classical definition of democracy, expands its scope to other areas where collective decision-taking is possible. It is derived from a synthesis of two major historical traditions, the classical democratic and the socialist, although it also encompasses radical green, feminist, and liberation movements in the South. Within the problematique of the inclusive democracy project, it is assumed that the world, at the beginning of the new millennium, faces a multi-dimensional crisis (economic, ecological, social, cultural and political) which is caused by the concentration of power in the hands of various elites, as a result of the establishment, in the last few centuries, of the system of market economy, representative democracy and the related forms of hierarchical structure. In this sense, an inclusive democracy, which involves the equal distribution of power at all levels, is seen not as a utopia (in the negative sense of the word) but as perhaps the only way out of the present crisis.

A fruitful, perhaps, way to begin the discussion on this new conception of democracy may be to distinguish between the two main societal realms, the public and the private, to which we may add an "ecological realm”.

The public realm, contrary to the practice of many supporters of the democratic project (Arendt, Castoriadisxe "Castoriadis", Bookchinxe "Bookchin" et al), is assumed here to include not just the political realm, but also any area of human activity where decisions can be taken collectively and democratically. So, the public realm includes:

- The political realm which is defined as the sphere of political decision-taking, the area where political power is exercised.
- The economic realm which is defined as the sphere of economic decision-taking, the area where economic power is exercised with respect to the broad economic choices that any scarcity society has to make.
- The social realm which is defined as the sphere of decision-taking in the workplace, the education place and any other economic or cultural institution that is a constituent element of a democratic society. Finally,
- The "ecological realm” which is defined as the sphere of the relations between the natural and the social worlds.

To my mind, the extension of the traditional public realm to include, apart from the political realm, the economic, ecological and ‘social’ realms is an indispensable element of an inclusive democracy. We may therefore distinguish between four main types of democracy that constitute the fundamental elements of an inclusive democracy: political, economic, ecological and ‘democracy in the social realm’. Political, economic and democracy in the social realm may be defined, briefly, as the institutional framework that aims at the equal distribution of political, economic and social power respectively, in other words, as the system which aims at the effective elimination of the domination of human being over human being. Correspondingly, we may define ecological democracy as the institutional framework that aims at the elimination of any human attempt to dominate the natural world, in other words, as the type of social organisation which aims to reintegrate

society and nature.

In the political realm there can only be one form of democracy, what we may call *political* or *direct democracy*, where political power is shared equally among all citizens. So, political democracy is founded on the equal sharing of political power among all citizens, the self-instituting of society. This means that the following conditions have to be satisfied for a society to be characterised as a political democracy:

- 1. Democracy is grounded on the conscious ***choice*** of its citizens for individual and collective autonomy and not on any divine or mystical dogmas and preconceptions, or any closed theoretical systems involving social/natural 'laws', or tendencies determining social change;
- 2. Institutionalised political ***processes*** of an oligarchic nature. This implies that all political decisions (including those relating to the formation and execution of laws) are taken by the citizen body collectively and without representation;
- 3. No institutionalised political ***structures*** embodying unequal power relations. This means, for instance, that where delegation of authority takes place to segments of the citizen body, in order to carry out specific duties (e.g., to serve as members of popular courts, or of regional and confederal councils, etc.), the delegation is assigned, on principle, by lot, on a rotation basis, and it is always recallable by the citizen body. Furthermore, as regards delegates to regional and confederal bodies, the mandates should be specific. This is an effective step towards the abolition of hierarchical relations since such relations today are based, to a significant extent, on the myth of the 'experts' who are supposed to be able to control everything, from nature to society. However, apart from the fact that the knowledge of the so-called experts is doubtful (at least as far as social, economic and political phenomena is concerned), still, in a democratic society, political decisions are not left to the experts but to the users, the citizen body. This principle was consistently applied by the Athenians for whom "all citizens were to take part, if they wished, in running the state, but all were to be amateurs…professionalism and democracy were regarded as, at bottom, contradictory"[19];
- 4. All residents of a particular geographical area and of a viable population size beyond a certain age of maturity (to be defined by the citizen body itself) and irrespective of gender, race, ethnic or cultural identity, are members of the citizen body and are directly involved in the decision-taking process.

The basic unit of decision making in an inclusive democracy is the *demotic* assembly, i.e. the assembly of ***demos***, the citizen body in a given geographical area that delegates power to demotic courts, demotic militias, etcetera. However, apart from the decisions to be taken at the local level, there are a lot of important decisions to be taken at the regional or confederal level, as well as at the workplace. So, an inclusive democracy today can only take the form of a confederal democracy that is based on a network of administrative councils, whose members or delegates are elected from popular face-to-face democratic assemblies in the various *demoi*. Such *demoi*, geographically, may encompass a town and the surrounding villages, or even neighbourhoods of large cities. The members of the confederal councils are strictly mandated, recallable, and responsible to the assemblies that choose them for the purpose of co-ordinating and administering the policies formulated by the assemblies themselves. Their function is thus purely administrative and practical, not a policy-making one, like the function of representatives in representative 'democracy'.[20] As

regards the decisions which have to be taken at the places of work, the proposed scheme envisages a system of demotic and workplace assemblies in which people as citizens and workers respectively take part. Finally, delegates from the demotic assemblies take part in regional assemblies and the confederal assembly.

The first issue that arises with respect to a confederal democracy is whether, given the size of modern societies, direct democracy is feasible today. A related issue is how the regional and confederal councils can be prevented from developing into new power structures that will start 'representing' demotic assemblies. As regards the question of feasibility in general, as Mogens Herman Hansen[21] points out, summarising the results of recent research on the topic, "modern technology has made a return to direct democracy quite feasible-whether desirable or not is another matter". Also, as regards the related issue of how the degeneration of confederal councils into new power structures may be avoided, modern technology can, again, play a significant role. An electronic network could connect the demotic assemblies at the regional or confederal level, forming a huge "assembly's assembly". This way, confining the members of the regional or confederal councils to purely administrative duties of co-ordination and execution of the policies adopted by demotic assemblies is made even easier. Furthermore, at the institutional level, various safety valves may be introduced into the system that will secure the effective functioning of democracy. However, in the last instance, it is *paedeia* that may effectively condition democratic practice.

As far as economic democracy is concerned, the definition of economic democracy has to imply the abolition of economic power relations. Thus, if we define political democracy as the authority of the people (*demos*) in the political sphere —which implies the existence of political equality in the sense of equal distribution of political power— then economic democracy is the authority of *demos* in the economic sphere —which implies the existence of economic equality in the sense of equal distribution of economic power. And, of course, we are talking about the *demos* and not the state, because the existence of a state means the separation of the citizen body from the political and economic process. Economic democracy therefore relates to a social system which institutionalises the integration of society and the economy and may be defined as an economic *structure* and a *process* which, through direct citizen participation in the economic decision-taking and decision-implementing process, secures an equal distribution of economic power among citizens. This means that, ultimately, the demos controls the economic process, within an institutional framework of *demotic* ownership of the means of production.

On the basis of the above definition of economic democracy, the following conditions have to be satisfied for a society to be characterised as an economic democracy:

- No institutionalised economic *processes* of an oligarchic nature. This means that all 'macro' economic decisions, namely, decisions concerning the running of the economy as a whole (overall level of production, consumption and investment, amounts of work and leisure implied, technologies to be used, etc.) are taken by the citizen body collectively and without representation, although "micro" economic decisions at the workplace or the household levels may be taken by the individual production or consumption unit and
- No institutionalised economic *structures* embodying unequal economic power relations. This implies that the means of production and distribution are collectively

owned and directly controlled by the *demos*. Any inequality of income is therefore the result of additional voluntary work at the individual level. Such additional work, beyond that required by any capable member of society for the satisfaction of *basic needs*, allows only for additional consumption, as no individual accumulation of capital is possible, and any wealth accumulated as a result of additional work is not inherited. Thus, *demotic ownership* of the economy provides the economic ***structure*** for democratic ownership, whereas direct citizen participation in economic decisions provides the framework for a comprehensively democratic control ***process*** of the economy. The *demos*, therefore, becomes the authentic unit of economic life, as it should be, given that economic democracy is not feasible today unless both the ownership and control of productive resources are organised at the local level. So, unlike the other definitions of economic democracy, the definition given here involves the explicit negation of economic power and implies the authority of the people in the economic sphere. In this sense, economic democracy is the counterpart of political democracy, as well as the foundation of an inclusive democracy in general.

As I have described in some detail elsewhere[22] how an economic democracy could be envisaged, there is no need to expand on this further here. I would only mention, briefly, **that** the main characteristic of the proposed model, which also differentiates it from socialist planning models, is that it explicitly presupposes a stateless, moneyless and marketless economy that precludes private accumulation of wealth and the institutionalisation of privileges for some sections of society, without having to rely on a mythical post-scarcity state of abundance, or having to sacrifice freedom of choice. It is based on *demotic* self-reliance, *demotic* ownership of productive resources, and a confederal allocation of resources with the twofold aim of:

- meeting the basic needs of all citizens —which requires that basic macro-economic decisions are taken democratically and
- securing freedom of choice —which requires the individual to take important decisions affecting his/her own life (what work to do, what to consume etc.)

However, political and economic power are not the only forms of power and therefore political and economic democracy do not, by themselves, secure an inclusive democracy. In other words, an inclusive democracy is inconceivable unless it extends to the broader social realm to embrace the workplace, the household, the educational institution and indeed any economic or cultural institution which constitutes an element of this realm. Finally, as far as ecological democracy is concerned, a democratic ecological problematique cannot go beyond the institutional preconditions which offer the best hope for a better human relationship to Nature. However, there are strong grounds to believe that the relationship between an inclusive democracy and Nature would be much more harmonious than could ever be in a market economy, or in socialist statism, since both take for granted the aim of unlimited economic growth which, since the Enlightenment, has been identified with Progress. Furthermore, as I attempted to show elsewhere[23], all the other components of an inclusive democracy (political, economic and social) imply a completely different, environment-friendly, relationship between Society and Nature from the one so far achieved in modernity.

3. Statecraft versus Politics and the New World Order

The present abuse and distortion of the meaning of democracy has been inevitably accompanied by a corresponding distortion of the meaning of politics, which today has been reduced to mean 'the art of the feasible'
—something which in practice means, particularly in the New World Order, statecraft, i.e. 'the art of conducting affairs of the state'. Thus, the separation of society from the state and the economy has converted politics and the running of the economy into an 'art' and a 'science', respectively, where 'experts' (professional politicians, capitalists, economists, etc.) play a crucial role in decision making. In contrast, a basic principle on which the Athenian democracy (where there was no separation of society from the state) was founded was that in politics there is no science but only the citizens' opinion. Therefore, the original meaning of Politics, which was associated with the classical definition of democracy, had very little to do, if anything, with the above definition of politics.

Thus, in every statist form of 'democracy', either of the liberal multi-party type, or of the socialist single-party (avant-garde party) type, politics, almost inevitably takes the form of statecraft.

In a liberal multi-party system, as T.C. rightly points out, political parties represent primarily special interests. This is the case not only in the present NWO in which all parties have to adopt the political agenda of neoliberal globalisation imposed on them by the institutional framework of open and liberalised markets but also in previous phases of modernity in which parties used to represent political movements expressing differentiated sets of values. Thus, conservative parties expressed primarily the interests of the upper social classes, whereas Labour or Social Democratic parties expressed, also, (although never exclusively), the interests of the working classes. So, no political party in a multi-party liberal 'democracy' could qualify to represent the general interest. Thus, in previous forms of modernity, a party had to express the class interests of its supporters —as long as they were compatible with the existing institutional framework of the market economy. Similarly, in the present NWO, it has to express the even more special interests of specific parts of capital which sponsor the parties' hugely expensive electoral campaigns and promote their programs, through the controlled by the elites mass media. In both cases, therefore, as political parties have to take for granted the socio-economic system of the capitalist market system, they can never challenge the institutional framework itself but only the policies adopted each time for its better functioning. So, in both cases, politics takes the form of statecraft, even though the scope of statecraft was much wider in previous forms of modernity than at present, since, at that time, an incoming new government could radically change economic policies, in accordance with the class interests of its supporters. On the other hand, today, an incoming new government does not have even this option— something that has led to the present deep political crisis in advanced capitalist countries.

Also, in a single-party socialist 'democracy', although the vanguard party may express the general interest (though not always and particularly so in the case of an elite with vested economic interests which has taken control of the party, as is the case with the Chinese Communist Party today), still, politics also takes inevitably the form of statecraft. This is because any collective challenge by citizens of the decisions taken by the party (which in practice usually means the Central Committee, or just the Politburo, if not the party leader alone!) is virtually impossible, since no real collective discussion outside the party (sometimes not even within the party!) --with a real power to reverse basic party decisions--

is possible.

So, as I mentioned above, the issue of a multi-party vs. a single party organisation is not the crucial one with respect to democracy. The crucial issues which determine, the undemocratic or otherwise, character of a political system are, first, representation vs. direct democracy and, second, the statist vs. the non-statist character of it. In this problematique, a direct democracy does not have to be a multi-party system, nor a single-party system for that matter. A direct democracy of the ID kind should in fact be a non-party democracy, given the risk of parties exercising an undue influence on citizens' assemblies, as well as the risk of parties developing formal, or even informal, hierarchical structures within their own ranks. Still, if people power is organised on the basis of demotic assemblies, peripheral assemblies and confederal assemblies, as well as assemblies at the place of work, education etc, the question remains: should the existence of various political organisations be allowed, which would function outside the formal democratic institutions and allow citizens to meet similar-minded people on various issues, so that they could discuss and formulate a common stand in the official debates of these democratic bodies? I think the answer to this question should be positive provided however that such organisations would not be of the kind of political parties we have today, which reproduce present society's hierarchical and competitive structures. Needless to add that their aims should be compatible with those of an Inclusive Democracy, namely, they should not aim to restore a representative pseudo-democracy, or an authoritarian regime of any kind, or finally a regime based on a religious or any other kind of irrationalism. In other words, the only aim of such political organisations should be to deliberate and propose to citizens' assemblies various ways in which the basic and non-basic needs of the people should be covered, or alternative ways of organising an Inclusive democracy with the same aim.

So, by defining freedom in terms of autonomy as in the first section, it is possible to see democracy not just as a *structure* institutionalising the equal sharing of power, but, also, as a *process* of social self-institution, in the context of which Politics constitutes an expression of both collective and individual autonomy. Thus, Politics:

- as an expression of collective autonomy, takes the form of calling into question the existing institutions and changing them through deliberate collective action; also,
- as an expression of individual autonomy, "the polis secures more than human survival; politics makes possible man's development as a creature capable of genuine autonomy, freedom and excellence."[24]

In this sense, the aim of politics is not, as at present, the manipulation of the electorate and `statecraft', through think-tanks and scores of technocrats formulating policies which, after being adopted by presidents, prime ministers and their inner circles, and following their rubber stamping by their majority parties in national assemblies, Parliaments etc, become state policies. Instead, Politics becomes the autonomous activity of autonomous individuals in managing their own affairs, or, as Castoriadis[25] put it, the activity which permits the explicit, reflective, and deliberate self-institution and self-governance of a collectivity.

What is hopeful for the future is that, today, few doubt that what passes as politics and democracy is in deep trouble**.** A 'crisis of politics', as an integral part of the present multi-dimensional crisis, has developed in the present neoliberal modernity, which undermines the very foundations of representative 'democracy'. This crisis is expressed by several

symptoms which, frequently, take the form of an implicit or explicit questioning of fundamental political institutions (parties, electoral contests, etc.). Such symptoms are:

- the significant and often rising abstention rates in electoral contests, particularly in USA and UK,
- the explosion of discontent in the form of frequently violent riots,
- the diminishing numbers of party members,
- the fact that the respect for professional politicians has never been at such a low level, with the recent financial scandals in countries like Italy, France, Spain, Greece, USA and elsewhere simply reaffirming the belief that politics, for the vast majority of the politicians —liberals and social democrats alike— is just a job, i.e., a way to make money and enhance social status.

Several factors at work could explain the growing crisis in traditional politics but the main ones refer to two principal elements of the present neoliberal modernity:

First, the old ideological differences between the Left and the Right have disappeared. Elections have become beauty contests between "charismatic" leaders and the party machines backing them, which fight each other to attract the attention of the electorate, in order to implement policies constituting variations of the same theme: maximisation of the freedom of market forces at the expense of both the welfare state (which is steadily undermined) and the state's commitment to full employment (which is irrevocably abandoned). In fact, today's electoral contests are decided by the 'contented electoral majority'[26], whereas the `underclass', which was created by neoliberalism and automation, mostly does not take part in such contests

Second, the crisis is exacerbated by the growing concentration of political and economic power in neoliberal modernity, as a result of the dynamics of representative 'democracy' and the market economy respectively.

In conclusion, the fact that in today's 'democracy' people have no power at all to reverse the economic policies imposed by neoliberal globalisation, which put the survival of very many at risk for the benefit of very few who control the world economy through the market system and, also, the fact that they feel utterly unable to stop the criminal wars of the transnational elite, as well as the ongoing catastrophic destruction of the environment, make most people in the North totally frustrated and lead them to a growing apathy and to privacy. At the same time, many people in the South, who feel even more strongly than people in the North the direct impact of the huge concentration of power at the hands of various elites in the name of 'democracy', are prepared to sacrifice even their own lives in desperate acts of resistance. It is therefore clear that as long as the present institutional framework of the internationalised market economy and representative 'democracy' reproduces itself, thanks to the systematic efforts of the local and international elites which mainly benefit from them and the apathy of most of the rest, the present multidimensional crisis (political, economic, ecological and social) will grow deeper by the day.

It is also more evident than ever that the only way to stop this disastrous process is the development of a huge world-wide movement which, starting from below at the local level, will fight with the double aim, first, to build the alternative institutions of Inclusive Democracy that will replace the present catastrophic system and, second, to wipe out the

local and international elites which concentrate political and economic power in their hands at the expense of most of the people in the world.

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[1] In this issue.

[2] Takis Fotopoulos, *Towards An Inclusive Democracy*, (London/N.Y: Chassell/Continuum, 1997), pp. 177-180.

[3] Takis Fotopoulos, *Towards An Inclusive Democracy,* ch. 5.

[4] As Chomsky put it, celebrating the collapse of 'state socialism' on the grounds that this system was characterised by lack of control over production by producers and a similar lack of elementary freedoms that had been won elsewhere, "the collapse of state socialism should have been welcomed by the Left as an important victory, which eliminated barriers to authentic socialism", see his interview in Democracy & Nature, Vol. 5, No. 1 (March 1999), p. 22.

[5] The degree of inequality in the distribution of income was lower in the countries under `actually existing socialism', than in Western countries at the same level of development, see e.g. Michael Ellman, *Socialist Planning* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), pp. 267-68.

[6] An indication of this fact is that Cuba has a much higher commitment to health and education than the USA, as it is shown by the fact that it has a lower mortality rate than the USA (Table 10) and that the Cubanese government spends on education almost three times as much as the US state out of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (Table 11). All this, despite the fact that USA ranks 4th, as far as its per capita income is concerned, in the list of 177 countries included in the UN statistics, whereas Cuba ranks 92nd! UN, *Human Development Report* 2005.

[7] See Takis Fotopoulos, *The Multidimensional Crisis and Inclusive Democracy,* chs. 2 and 6.

[8] Ibid. chs. 3-4.

[9] Anthony H. Birch, *The Concepts and Theories of Modern Democracy* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 58.

[10] Bhikhu Parekh, "The Cultural Particularity of Liberal Democracy", p. 165 in *Prospects for Democracy*, ed. by D. Held (Cambridge: Polity, 1993).

[11] Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (London: Penguin, 1990), pp. 237-38.

[12] E.M. Wood, *Democracy Against Capitalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 214-15.

[13] Wood, Ibid., p. 216.

[14] Takis Fotopoulos, *Towards An Inclusive Democracy*, pp. 199-206.

[15] Karl Marx, *Critique of the Gotha Programme (*Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1937), p. 25.

[16] V. I. Lenin, *The State and Revolution* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1917), pp. 31-32.

[17] V. I. Lenin, *The State and Revolution,* p. 165.

[18] V. I. Lenin, *The State and Revolution,* pp. 174-75.

[19] Mogens Herman Hansen, *The Athenian Democracy in the Age of Demosthenes* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), p. 308.

[20] Murray Bookchin has described a similar scheme which however is based on communities and does not involve a proper economic democracy since it assumes away the problem of scarcity, see "The Meaning of Confederalism", *Society and Nature,* Vol. 1, No. 3 (1993).

[21] Hansen, *The Athenian Democracy in the age of Demosthenes*, p. 1. The references quoted by Hansen on the feasibility of direct democracy today include: F.C. Arterton, *Teledemocracy* (Washington, D.C. 1987), I. McLean, *Democracy and New Technology* (Cambridge, 1989).

[22] see Takis Fotopoulos, *Towards An Inclusive Democracy,* ch. 6 and *The Multidimensional Crisis and Inclusive Democracy,* ch. 14.

[23] Takis Fotopoulos, *Towards An Inclusive Democracy,* ch. 5 and *The Multidimensional Crisis and Inclusive Democracy,* ch. 15.

[24] Cynthia Farrar, referring to the thought of the sophist philosopher Protagoras. *See* her article, "Ancient Greek Political Theory as a Response to Democracy" in *Democracy, the Unfinished Journey, 508 BC to AD 1993*, ed by John Dunn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 24.

[25] Cornelius Castoriadis, *Philosophy, Politics, Autonomy*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 76.

[26] J.K. Galbraith, *The Culture of Contentment* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1993).