

## **Dictating Democracy**

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The paradox of dictating democracy, of enforcing freedom, of extorting emancipation.

—Niall Ferguson, *Colossus: The Price of America's Empire* (2004)

### **Introduction**

I should confess at the outset that this is an unusual kind of paper in that it is not concerned to locate its argument in any particular intellectual tradition and takes certain fairly commonplace assumptions for granted. For instance, at the beginning of the first section I refer to four current political presumptions without providing chapter and verse to establish that they are current; in section four I refer to the fact that there are practical restraints on frank-speaking, but support the claim with only the barest of references; in section five I refer to the long history of interference in the government of others by the United States of America, citing some examples but without providing any detail, and, throughout, I rely on my own authority for what I have to say about Athenian democracy. The reasons for this are that, in my view, all these various claims are fairly uncontentious and that, more importantly, they serve here as premises (sometimes, indeed, mere background) to an argument, and my focus is on the argument set forth.

The crux of that argument is that the value of democracy does not lie in its institutions or its form so much as in other values that the institutions are supposed to serve, in particular equal representation

of everybody's interests and freedom, which are themselves partly to be valued for the substantive good that they may contribute to. If this is broadly convincing, it follows that the mere creation of democratic structures is of no necessary importance. If this is broadly convincing, it also follows that education is important in at least two distinct respects: first, current understanding of the nature and value of democracy is confused and in part erroneous and we need to develop a better understanding of it in our schools; secondly, democracy is not likely to flourish in new soil, unless we also educate people in relation to the values that democracy subserves, and gradually initiate them into some experience of democratic ways (although, on this last point, I resist the conclusion that the argument commits us to an entirely democratically organized schooling).

### **Democracy**

Currently, political rhetoric and practice, throughout the western world, but particularly and most obviously in the United States, are based upon four seemingly unexceptionable propositions: (i) "democracy is an intrinsically good thing," (ii) "we (the speaker) have the truest democracy," (iii) "it is morally legitimate to impose democracy on others," and (iv) "we can effectively do so." What the connection between these various claims is supposed to be is not always entirely clear. Is the reasoning that since democracy is inherently good we are entitled to impose it on others, or is it perhaps that it is because we are the truest democracy that we have some right to dictate to others? Is it that we will succeed, because we are truly democratic, or that success is assured because of the intrinsic goodness in democracy? But in the end the questions of the precise nature and the coherence of the reasoning that links these propositions hardly matters, since each of the four claims is in itself extremely dubious.

Quite why the United States (or anywhere else) should assume that it represents the apotheosis of democracy is unclear. In order to establish any claim to be the quintessential X (e.g., democratic state), two conditions need to be met: there has to be a clear and unequivocal definition of X, and there has to be some evidence to support the contention that one meets the defining characteristics of X. In the case of the United States' claim to being the pre-eminent democracy there is an abundance of argument to suggest that it is not, at least in respect of the sort of criteria for democracy most commonly advanced. Thus, to cite two well-known and obvious points: citizens of the United States do not directly elect their own president (who may as a consequence not have the support of the majority), and the resources required to run for office effectively disbar the majority from a political career. More generally, one does not have to

be a Michael Moore (2001) or a Ralph Nader to recognize that corporate and media interests to a very large extent control both the process and the outcome in American politics.<sup>1</sup> This is a far cry from any plausible notion of rule by the people and for the people.

But this brings us to the second point, which is actually more important: there is no agreed definition of democracy, so how can any state claim to be the best example of it? Democracy is a polymorphous concept which is to say that, like gardening or teaching, it may take many different forms and in each case be equally a bona fide instance of democracy (gardening or teaching). Secondly, it is what Gallie (1955) long ago and usefully termed an “essentially contested” concept: largely (but not entirely) because it is inherently evaluative, the question of what constitutes true democracy is forever open to argument. Certainly there are no a priori grounds for assuming that the particular form that democracy takes in the United States (or anywhere else) is “truer,” “more democratic than” or “superior to” various other forms that it has taken historically or takes today in other places.

The fact that the concept is essentially contested does not mean, however, that, like Humpty Dumpty, we can make the word mean whatever we want. There is a minimal descriptive content that sets limits on what can count as democracy. More or less uncontentionally “democracy” means “government by the people or their elected representatives,” and it is to be contrasted with government by either an individual ruler or a minority group which in either case is not answerable to the people as a whole. It is true that this definition invites a lot of further questions: the Athenians, for example, in developing the first known democracy, did not count women, resident aliens or the disproportionately large body of slaves as people in civic terms (as we do not count children). Furthermore, the definition says nothing about the nature or extent of government or the terms on which representatives may be said to be truly elected by the people. But the definition does provide us with solid ground to stand on and reminds us that subsequent debate about such things as what form election should take, who should count as citizens, and whether it is superior to other types of government is debate about a theory of government rather than about the meaning of democracy.

In a celebrated book written over fifty years ago, Schumpeter (1950) argued that by the eighteenth century a theory of democracy had arisen to the effect that democracy “realizes the common good by making the people itself decide issues through the election of individuals... to carry out its will.” He proceeded to reject this view, pointing out the difficulties involved in the notions of a common good and a common will. He then attempted to invert the theory and put the emphasis on the election

of representatives as the crucial fact rather than seeing them merely as the means of enacting the common will. But concentrated emphasis on the fact of representation (and its contemporary counterpart in American pride in the rather strange mechanics of their constitution) isn't enough. Yes, of course, the United States has a form of democracy, as does Switzerland, as does France, and as might be government by a series of referenda. But democracy as such, i.e., "government by the people or their elected representatives" is neither good nor bad, even if we believe that no individual or minority should dictate to others. In this Plato was clearly right: a democracy can be a very evil thing, just as a monarch can be a benign asset to a community.<sup>2</sup> The question is why we should value democracy, what are the goods we expect to realize through democracy, and the answer to that question will have some relevance to evaluating the quality of various different forms of democracy.

### **Athenian Democracy**

The view that because the Athenians were the first to evolve a democracy their form of government must be the truest democracy is certainly to be resisted. Nonetheless, there is good reason to look at their model, because it represented a relatively clear set of values and was not distorted by the contemporary need to play upon the evaluative connotations of the term. Today it is common to advance one's values and interests surreptitiously by calling them "democratic"; to the Greeks democracy was by no means necessarily a good thing; indeed, to Athens' enemies, democratic was as often as not a term of abuse.<sup>3</sup>

The Athenian democracy had a number of notable organizational features, ranging from its juries of sometimes as many as 501 ordinary citizens, via its Assembly open to all adult male citizens and its absence of political party organization, to its annual terms of office and strict public accountability. But these details of the mechanics of the democracy, celebrated as they are, are no more the grounds on which to evaluate Athenian democracy, than the details of United States democracy are grounds for assessing its quality. The value of the mechanics lies in their contribution to delivering goods that we wish to see delivered. This may, of course, include such putative goods as those of participation, freedom of thought and the exercise of choice; but even these values do not necessarily dictate any particular mechanics of government. Thus the strict system of accountability in the Athenian world was a distinct plus (as contrasted, perhaps, with the questionable accountability in contemporary America), but only because it contributed to keeping corruption at bay. Other systems of accountability might work equally well or better

at other times and places, and accountability is not in itself a good; it is the consequence of this particular accountability system that matters: the relative absence of corruption in government.

The values at the heart of Athenian democracy, and therefore the essence, lay rather in the ramifications of two broad political principles, known to them as *isonomia* and *eleutheria*. *Eleutheria* means “freedom” or “liberty,” while *isonomia* means “equality of political rights.” The latter is familiar to us and, in principle, fairly straightforward: despite manifest differences between individuals in ability, moral character, interest and so on, each is to count equally as, in Kantian terms, an end in himself.<sup>4</sup> It has already been noted that in Athens this principle was compromised somewhat by the fact that thousands of people did not count as “individuals,” and, of course, in any society there may be limits on who counts as such. (E.g., should the insane, infants or criminals necessarily have equal political rights?) But it will be widely agreed nonetheless that this is both an important principle and one reason for valuing democracy. There is a related connotation of “equality before the law” in *isonomia*, which reminds us that another reason for valuing democracy is that it replaces the potentially arbitrary decision making of individuals with the presumed impartiality and consistency of law.

Now, of course, a benign despot may care for his subjects even more than they do themselves, may set up good law, may treat all equally, and may be more effective in realizing the good than a democracy, but the latter is surely valued to some extent because we want and think it right that we should make our own choices. (This is not, incidentally, to contradict the point that the value of democracy lies in the goods that it is presumed to deliver: making our own choices, like freedom of thought, is one of those goods. But, in principle, a benign monarch could provide as much opportunity for choice as a given democratic system; in practice, paradoxically, perhaps even more so, in that a monarch could be in a better position to sort out conflicting choices in a fair way than would the democratic process).

Under the broad heading of freedom (*eleutheria*), the Athenians included at least two importantly distinct concepts: *parrhesia* and *isegoria*. The former refers to freedom of speech in the sense of frank-speaking: in Athens one could say more or less what one chose, regardless of what offense it might cause, as the comedies of Aristophanes abundantly show.<sup>5</sup> *Isegoria*, drawing a little on the idea of *isonomia* as well as *eleutheria*, refers to the equal right and opportunity that all have to make a contribution to any decision making (by speaking at the Assembly, voting on a motion, etc). There is also some evidence that making such a contribution was seen as a duty as well as a right.

### **Frank-Speaking**

This distinction between frank-speaking and participation in political debate is a useful one, and one which has been rather obscured today when the freedom of speech that we proudly proclaim is in reality neither one nor the other. Frank-speaking is very clearly neither particularly valued today nor, on occasion, even permitted. At best, society calls frank-speaking it doesn't like offensive, demeaning, impolite and anti-social; at worst it is seen as libel or an infringement of somebody's rights, and prosecuted. Nor, in practice, are we all equally free to contribute to the political debate: far from election of representatives being the means to making ourselves heard, in most cases our participation is limited to the act of election at infrequent intervals. The freedom of speech enjoyed in most democracies today is really little more than the freedom to express a limited range of dissenting political opinions.<sup>6</sup>

Mill (1962) was surely right to argue that there is no value and no sense in approving of freedom of speech provided that it does not involve anything one finds truly offensive. The point of approving it is precisely to say "although I don't like it, you are free to say it," and the argument for it remains that ultimately such a policy is the only way to serve the truth. The traditional response to this line of argument includes invoking examples such as the person who falsely and maliciously screams "fire" in a crowded theatre leading to panic and death, the treacherous broadcaster in time of war, the individual who leaks state secrets, and incitement to violence or hatred. Surely, it is said, we cannot give people the freedom to speak in these ways. But there is a response to this that both acknowledges the force of such examples and yet preserves the true principle of free speech. We need to draw a distinction between the content of speech and the context, by which I refer to the situation or occasion, of speech. The principle of free speech need not be a principle designed to allow you to say anything anywhere: after all, the point is not to license rudeness, malevolence, hatred or dangerous behavior. The point is that you should be free to express any kind of idea or thought, rather than that you should be free to do it anywhere and at any time. It should also be noted that freedom of speech should not be taken to cover the telling of lies or other deliberate forms of deception. It is not freedom of utterance (i.e. a speech act), it is not behavior, that should be truly free, but the expression of any thought, no matter what its nature. This is not to suggest that the matter is easy. Obviously, in addition to complex arguments about what situations do justify suspending the right to speak, there is room for a great deal of debate on what does or does not constitute incitement, what is dangerous, etc. But the fact that

there remain some borderline cases and legitimate room for interpretation should be distinguished from the point that we have and should uphold a clear principle: nothing should in itself be deemed unsayable, regardless of what hurt or offence it may in itself cause to some persons. If that is persuasive, then we need to look for a form of democracy that upholds the principle, and, as we shall now see, it is by no means the case that contemporary forms of democracy do so particularly well.

### Democratic Values

Fairly clearly freedom of speech in the sense of *parrhesia* is substantially curbed in democracies such as that of the United States by a variety of formal and informal pressure groups. This does not, of course, mean that I cannot say (much of) what I want to say. But if the value lies in the dissemination of ideas, the expression of beliefs, the exchange of insights and the consideration of convictions rather than in the fact of the possibility of utterance, as I suggest it does, then it is a criticism of, and a failing in, a democracy that freedom of speech is effectively constrained to some degree, regardless of the fact that in a given instance no direct government censorship is involved. Indeed, this is a particular instance of my general argument: it is not an institutional setting that formally allows free speech that is important, so much as that there should be a government that ensures that conflicting opinions and ideas can be disseminated. But in our world there are things that one is effectively prevented from saying—or made to pay a penalty for saying—by fear of litigation or being socially condemned. There are things that cannot in practice be said because access to any meaningful form of distribution is denied: thus school textbooks have to conform to the requirements of the publishing industry, which are effectively to a large extent dictated to by interest groups (Ravitch, 2003); more generally, control of the media in a limited number of hands makes a mockery of the idea that we are all equally free to express our opinions (Greenslade, 2003). And there are in fact a number of things that we are explicitly forbidden to say by law.

My argument here is that freedom of speech in the sense of *parrhesia* is a value that we no longer truly uphold, and even *isegoria*, the freedom to express opinions, is heavily qualified. But it is these values rather than a particular form of democratic government that truly matter: a representational system of government that fails to deliver on such values has no obvious recommendation. The strongest argument for democracy is that it is more likely than other forms of government to uphold freedom of speech, freedom to participate and some kind of equality of political rights. The more a particular form of democratic

government does this the more it is to be approved, though it is not necessarily any more democratic. The further argument for valuing these principles is that through free expression and recognition of equality before the law we are most likely to promote truth and peaceful ways of compromising or changing our ways as appropriate. The democracy worth fighting for is not best defined in terms of its mechanics or its structure, nor, for example, well characterized in terms of free elections. Its value resides in the fact that all are regarded as and treated equally, freedom of expression both in the sense of frank-speaking and the right to play a part in decision-making is absolute, and practice is the result of some kind of negotiated common policy. In some ways, it is still best thought of as the Greeks tended to think of it, in negative terms as the absence of control by any particular group or individual, whether formally (i.e., constitutionally, as in a monarchy or oligarchy) or informally (e.g., by the influence of media moguls, powerful interest groups, fashion). But the essence of the view that I am putting forward is that while it may well be the case (empirically) that some democratic forms of government would be more likely than monarchical or oligarchic forms to promote the freedoms and other values in question, democratic institutions do not in themselves guarantee this and some forms of democracy may in fact be very bad at it.

It is, no doubt, today very difficult in practice to maintain a democracy that can comprehensively nourish and uphold these values, but it is clear that on this argument the assumption that the United States is particularly democratic or represents the best of democracy is very insecure indeed. The problem is not, for example, that the decision to invade Iraq was made by the president and his advisors and divides the nation. Nor is there anything undemocratic in Blair's active support for the war against the wish of the vast majority of his fellow citizens. The lack of democracy is evident rather in the well-documented distortions and lies, in the control of information (not always by the government), in the various means whereby individuals are either not allowed to express their views or are effectively prevented from so doing, and the lack of real accountability for those with power, all of which stand in the way of government that really represents the people's wishes and serves the values that democracy is presumed to uphold. (Or, if it seems that I am inadvertently leaning towards re-defining democracy, reference to "the lack of democracy" can be rephrased as "the shortcomings of this particular form of democracy").

A democratic government, if that means simply having some form of elected representation, is not necessarily to be admired, and the United States' form of democracy as a matter of fact leaves a lot to be desired.



It certainly isn't the truest or best example of democracy, but rather a very imperfect one, having a cumbersome system of representation that sometimes means people are not truly represented and, more importantly, being weak on freedom of speech (despite its rhetoric on the subject), weak on political equality, and weak on accountability, while being strong on pressure groups, partisan decision-making, and corruption. (I will resist the temptation to consider whether it might nonetheless be preferable to all non-democratic forms of government, beyond observing that, a priori, it seems reasonable to suppose that there might be a monarchy or an oligarchy that was "better" in terms of serving the values in question).

### **Imposing Democracy**

So on what grounds do we impose our form of democracy on other people? It has been pointed out many times that the United States is in various ways a nation in denial (e.g., Ferguson, 2004). It is striking how easy it seems for those who used to denounce any and every attempt by the Soviet Union to impose its preferred pattern of government or its preferred politicians on neighboring states, to fail to see that the United States has repeatedly imposed forms of government and political leaders on foreign countries for the last hundred years. (There should be no need for me to cite examples here: leaving aside territories such as Hawaii, occupied in 1893, and Puerto Rico, occupied in 1898, which remained possessions or states of the U.S., and leaving aside West Germany and Japan occupied in the aftermath of the Second World War, the following territories have been successively occupied for varying periods of time by the United States: the Philippines, 1898-1946, Panama, 1903-1979, the Dominican Republic, 1916-1924, Haiti, 1915-1934, Palau, 1947-1994, Micronesia and the Marshall Islands, 1947-1986, South Korea, 1950-, South Vietnam, 1965-1972, Afghanistan, 2002-, and Iraq, 2003-. This is not to say that important distinctions cannot be made between some of these incursions. But the possibility that some might need to have their attention drawn to these examples of American "interference" has some bearing on my educational concerns. Insofar as we bring up individuals who are ignorant of basic political and historical facts about their country, as well as about political concepts and arguments, we can expect neither adequate appreciation of democracy nor adequate evaluation of the benefits and shortcomings of its various forms).

I do not intend to dwell long on this issue. While I certainly accept that there can be such a thing as a justified war (which is not the same thing as a "just" war, merely one that is the least of various evils), I cannot personally see that the desire to enforce democracy in another state

can alone provide a sufficient justification. (A more complex argument such as that enforcing democracy will lead to certain consequences might work in principle, when we think in terms of, say, the argument for imposing democracy in Iraq. But that is different; my claim is not, as I say, that a war can never be justified, but that it is not easy to see how the mere importation of democracy justifies it, because democracy is not in itself good or bad but depends for its value on its success in upholding certain values.) Nor is it likely to be effective. A less parochial attitude amongst today's politicians would have taught them that for about one hundred years the Athenians and the Spartans vied with each other in setting up, respectively, democracies and oligarchies in other people's states—all to no avail. Even a better grasp of our own recent history would have been illuminating: when in the last century has anyone succeeded in imposing democracy by force on a people who have no prior experience of it? Where democracy has more or less effectively taken root, it is in places such as India (or, more obviously but less revealingly, Canada and Australia) when years of colonial rule allowed the taste for both democratic procedures and the values that democracy subserves to germinate. To repeat: it is not the infrastructure, in the sense of democratic offices and elections, that will count in Iraq and Afghanistan, it is developing the appropriate mindset in people, by which I mean the values and commitments that we assume some form of democracy can best maintain. Such development must come from within; it requires education; it can be helped by example, habituation, and so forth, but it cannot, by definition, be imposed, and the process of nurturing democratic attitudes takes a long time. The failure to grasp this point is well illustrated by Huntington's (2004) lament: "in accordance with 'the paradox of democracy,' the introduction of democracy in other societies also often stimulates and provides access to power for anti-American forces such as nationalistic populist movements in Latin America and fundamentalist movements in Muslim countries." But there is no paradox here. There is merely a confusion between democracy and Americanisation, and a failure to recognize that people generally do not want a particular brand of democracy dictated to them.

Democracy, by which is meant any form of government that formally recognizes the equal rights of citizens to determine their destiny and has a mechanism for enabling them to do so, this being consistent with the minimum definition given above and the evaluative position being advanced, is to be contrasted with any form that presumes the right or allows the power of some individual or group to dictate to others. Ideally, democracy, therefore, must actually ensure that no individuals or groups are able, by whatever means, to take power and control to themselves

through force, threat, manipulation, etc., (as when the media control information or business interests exert influence behind the scenes); the less a given constitution in practice prevents such usurpation of power and control, the less reason we have to value it, regardless of the precise nature of its mechanisms, and, on the view being argued here, the less reason we have to give it the honorific title of “democratic.” There are of course further questions about what constitutes such things as power and how it actually functions, but the principled point that is of concern here is that limits, restrictions and restraints on people’s access to knowledge, opportunities, means, etc., contradict the values that make democracy worth having. One of many implications of this point is that education, at least when conceived of as a broad liberal education, in itself contributes to the likely success of democracy. The potential advantages of democracy have little chance of being achieved through ignorance and misconception.

Democracy is a good thing because we are all equally to be regarded as ends in ourselves, which is presumed to be a moral good in itself (though it is not a good which can only be realized in democracies and it is one that not all democracies can in fact successfully realize), and on the assumption that empirically freedom provides the best chance of reconciling differences in peaceful ways, partly by recognizing differences, and partly by enhancing truth. Thus the good is not inherent in democratic procedures so much as in its values (freedom and equality) and their potential consequences. The United States evidently has a democratic structure: that is to say, it has complex (probably far too complex and possibly self-defeating) procedures for representative government. However, it falls far short of ideal democracy in the various constraints, largely imposed by interest groups, that are placed upon the supposed freedom and equal rights of individuals. There are no obvious grounds for supposing that even an ideal democracy, let alone a far from perfect one, has any right to impose democratic forms of election on another state, nor is any such attempt going to be successful, if it simply involves the imposition of a process on a society that has no familiarity with or commitment to the ideals of *parrhesia*, *isegoria* and *isonomia*.

### **“With God on our Side” (Dylan)**

I have made explicit reference to the United States throughout this argument for the obvious reasons that the U.S. tends to advertise itself as the champion of democracy and that it provides the most recent example of initiating an attempt to impose democracy on others. But the implications to be drawn for education from this argument apply no

less to many other nations, whether allied to the U.S. as in the case of Britain or not as in the case of Canada. And the key educational message is surely very clear: it is the need to provide an altogether more critical and deep understanding of democracy than, generally speaking, is currently provided, given the tendency to see it in terms of institutions and procedures that are presumed to be intrinsically superior. While no doubt it is reasonable to continue to maintain that in many respects we, as citizens of these and other similar countries, are fortunate in various ways, it is not reasonable to foster, encourage or even allow widespread self-satisfaction or complacency about our constitution: to preach the innate superiority of our culture or politics, or to contribute to a sense that, in the “developed democracies,” all is for the best in the best of all possible worlds.

This means that we have to take active steps to develop understanding of the deeper argument surrounding the nature and value of democracy such as has been invoked here, albeit summarily. At the very least we must encourage a far more critical awareness of the complexities of the argument about democracy and, more particularly, freedom. In practical terms this in the first instance surely suggests that there should be a great deal less flag waving, both figuratively and literally, and a concerted attempt to break away from insisting on the inherent excellence of democracy and, in particular, the use of words such as *democratic* as undisguised and unqualified terms of positive evaluation.

It may also lead us to reconsider whether it is always appropriate to insist on democratic arrangements and procedures within the educational system. There is a familiar and, I concede, strong argument, parallel to the argument above that democracy will take root better in places where people are in some sense prepared for it, to the effect that if individuals are to grow up in ways that enable them to participate effectively in a democracy they need to grow up in a democratic environment and to experience democracy within the school. As I say, the argument is to be taken seriously, but I suggest that it should be balanced by two distinct considerations: first, the desirability of ensuring some familiarity with democratic procedures and institutions does not necessarily lead to the conclusion that the whole of schooling should be organized in a fully procedurally democratic way, and, secondly, such provision of experience with the mechanics of democracy is no substitute for contemplation of the concept of democracy, examination of the values that it may serve, and the broader education that provides the kind of understanding that helps a democracy to work better rather than worse.

Broadly speaking then, a less uncritical attitude to democracy is essential, but there are some fairly obvious more specific curriculum

implications here. What has struck many commentators (e.g., Bloom, 1987; Hirsch, 1987; Bailey, 1984; Barrow, 1990) as the insularity and parochialism of the school curriculum needs to be addressed. Specifically, the lack of historical awareness, comparative understanding, and conceptual finesse<sup>7</sup> that is so widespread, from president to primary school teacher, must be a major concern. This becomes part of the wider argument that our schools need to place less emphasis on technical and professional training and on a mechanistic approach to social and mental skills, and more on educating people in the sense of developing a humanistic understanding, because it is a lack of the latter that allows people to engage in and be seduced by what is quite often merely empty rhetoric. We can hardly expect support for sane policies if people in general accept, for example, the stereotype of the Arab broadcasting station Al-Jazeera as a dangerous and corrupt tool of insurgency, when it is no such thing.<sup>8</sup> More generally, I am not the first to point out that the policy adopted in relation to Iraq, whatever its merits, appears to have been based on no understanding at all of the contemporary and historical realities of the Middle East.

There is no need to make this essay an attack on President Bush or to suggest that he acted deceitfully or improperly according to his own lights; but it is surely now clear to all but the most partisan that those who said from the start that his policy was wrong, both morally and prudentially, were correct. I have attempted to argue that the main reason that such a policy was pursued was a lack of understanding, particularly historical, comparative (or geographical) and philosophical understanding, rather than any particular moral or political failing. It was the superficiality and inadequacy of people's understanding of democracy, of foreign cultures, history and moral philosophy that fundamentally led to the situation we are in now, as it has done before and as it will very likely do again. A liberal or humanistic education for all is most urgently needed, if we are to survive, let alone improve the world we live in.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> See, for example, besides Moore (2001), Jacoby (1998) and Huntington (2004). See also, in relation to the United States and the theme of this paper, Chomsky (2003) and Singer (2004).

<sup>2</sup> See the *Republic*, 555D ff, where Plato discusses the emergence of democracy and some of its defects. But the entire passage from 543-576 should be read to understand Plato's views on different forms of government. It cannot be said too often that those critics who simply think that Plato is in favour of authoritarianism and hostile to democracy are mistaken. See Barrow (1975). Esp. pp. 34-37.

<sup>3</sup> For a brief introduction to Athenian democracy see, Barrow (2001); for a broader picture, see Forrest (1966); for constitutional details, see Glotz (1929).

<sup>4</sup> For Kant's view of people as ends in themselves, see Paton (1946).

<sup>5</sup> The most obvious example is Aristophanes' treatment of the politician Cleon in his plays the *Knights* and the *Wasps*. But one could add reference to the treatment of Socrates in the *Clouds* and Aeschylus and Euripides in the *Frogs*, not to mention the hundreds of casual and unflattering references to other public figures, both known and unknown to us. See Hadas, (1962) or any of the Penguin Edition translations of the plays.

<sup>6</sup> Schauer (1982) remains an excellent study of free speech.

<sup>7</sup> "Conceptual Finesse" is a term that I first coined in Barrow (1981). See also Barrow and Milburn (1990).

<sup>8</sup> On Al-Jazeera, see Miles (2005).

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