

**"DEMOCRACY TENDS TOWARDS PROSPERITY"**

*QUOTES FROM RICHARD ROBINSON AN ATHEIST'S VALUES ON THE STATE AND POLITICS AND EQUALITY*

Richard Robinson, An Atheist's Values, 1964.

Democracy tends towards prosperity.

Acton wrote that 'the possession of unlimited power corrodes the conscience, Robinson shows how communism has religions main trait, "The Communist has faith in the doctrines of Marx or Lenin precisely in that no evidence or argument could make him abandon them. To desiderate a democratic faith, in this sense, would be to long to enjoy the delights of fanaticism and cease being a reasonable person, to desire to be dispensed from the duty of weighing evidence and holding oneself always prepared to change one's view in case of new considerations altering the balance of probability. Communism is indeed a faith, a religion, in a very large part of the sense of those words. It shares the counter-rational character of what is usually called 'religion', though not its theism; and the threat of Communism against reason today is a little like the threat of primitive Christianity against the reasonableness of the Greeks and Romans."

People talk about just war but don't like to talk about revolution. Robinson writes, When, if ever, is there a moral duty or right to attempt the illegal overthrow of the governors? Certainly there could sometimes be such a moral duty. There could be a monstrously harmful governor who could not be legally removed but could by illegal means be replaced with someone much less harmful; and if this happened revolution would evidently be a moral duty. Can we then write any principle bearing on the matter? Dr. Popper has written that 'the use of violence is justified only under a tyranny which makes reforms without violence impossible, and should have only one aim, that is, to bring about a state of affairs which makes reforms without violence possible' (The Open Society, U.S. ed., p. 340). This implies both that violence may be right under a tyranny and that violence is never right under a democracy. I have found by writing to him that Dr Popper allows one case where violence may be right even under a democracy, namely where the country is about to cease to be a democracy and some illegal action might prevent this.

By 'utopianism' I mean the idea that there is a perfect constitution, and politics could be perfect.

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Utopianism often leads to excessive moralizing and indignation in politics. He who believes that society could be perfect easily becomes indignant at politicians who effect compromises. Hence the New Statesman type of politics, consisting in moralistic abuse of everything that is done. Let our politics consist in specific proposals for the future, not in abuse of the past. Let us spread the convictions that evil is always with us, that politics is always a choice of evils, and that democracy, for the reasons I have recited, is the best of the very imperfect constitutions which alone are possible.

COMMENT: Christianity offers utopia not in this world but the next which is worse. Utopia in this world leads to trouble but also a lot of good and the realities of life will make it crumble if it is flawed. A Utopia in the next life is more dangerous for if it is bad reality cannot dismantle it.

