

In Love With #Democracy

By [Arthur D. Robbins](#)

Theme: [History](#)

Global Research, November 13, 2014

Democracy, like love, is a word oft used and little understood. We have a vague sense of what love “means.” We tend to apply the word indiscriminately, based on a deep need to be loved by the people who are important to us. We like to see the word in print. We feel warm and safe when we hear it said aloud.

When we are “in love” our vision is hazy. Our judgment is weak. We tend to believe what we want to believe and shunt aside any indication that what we believe may not be true.

Like love, democracy makes us feel good, feel safe and secure. It supplies us with the hope and the belief that we, and our brothers and sisters everywhere, can realize our potential to the fullest.

When we live in a democracy we can trust our government to act in our best interests because we believe we are the government. When we are told we live in a democracy we believe so because we want to.

It is disturbing to learn that in fact our government was not set up to be a democracy but an oligarchy. To understand why this is true one needs to recognize that government is a numbers game, that is to say that the number of people who rule determine the form and structure of government.

When one person rules, the government is a monarchy or autocracy. When a few people rule that government is known as an oligarchy or aristocracy. When all the citizens govern, the government is a democracy.

“But,” you say, “we have elections. That is what makes us a democracy.” I reply that government is what we have the day after elections.

For example, in 1804, Napoleon held a plebiscite, that is to say an election, so the French people could decide if they wanted him to be emperor for life. The election was held and Napoleon got the results he was looking for. Let us imagine that the election was scrupulously fair, that all those who could vote, did vote, that the votes were accurately counted and that the decision for Napoleon to be emperor for life was unanimous. When the French awoke the next morning, they were living under a monarchy.

Any time there is an election and the many vote, the outcome will either be a monarchy or an oligarchy. In the Middle Ages it was common to vote in a king. In the modern age, where the many choose a few to represent them, the outcome is oligarchy.

The United States has a population in excess of 300 million. In the House of Representatives there sit 435 men and women who speak for them. Let’s round it up to 500. Thus it is that 600 thousand people have one voice speaking for their many, diverse and often conflicting

interests. How can one possibly call that democratic?

Democracy is a word of Greek origin. *Demos* means people. *Kratos* means power. Democracy means people power, a form of government in which the citizens govern themselves. There is no one to speak for them. They speak for themselves. Obviously, this is not the case in the United States or the other alleged “Western Democracies.”

It is often argued that democracy is suited to small city-states and that it is too cumbersome for today’s nation-state. The simple and obvious answer is to break the large nation-state into small, manageable units, establish thousands of local assemblies that debate the issues and then collect the votes nationwide.

I suspect that though democracy is feasible it would have few supporters if people understood the true meaning of the word. There is great fear of “mobocracy.” The masses will take over and crush us. It is safe to leave things as they are. Those in charge know what they are doing. We don’t. Let’s leave the business of government to the professionals.

What if those in charge don’t know what they are doing. Then what? Perhaps we need to come up with an alternative. But if we choose to embrace the current system at least we should start calling it by its proper name, oligarchy. There is good reason to be accurate in choosing one’s terms when government is the subject matter. A lot hangs in the balance.

Yet just about every American, regardless of race, color, creed, sexual and political preference seems to be in the thrall of “democracy,” a phantom, a dream, a wish, definitely not a reality. This loyalty to a myth is especially dangerous when some of the most enlightened, humane and articulate amongst us, some of our most prominent and highly regarded are infected.

Bill Moyers has been a journalist, radio and TV commentator, an outspoken critic of the status quo for decades. He is a man of courage and compassion. And yet, with the best of intentions, he is feeding us to the wolves. He is promoting the myth that elections are democracy, a myth that disempowers us and numbs our political sensibilities.

In an article entitled, “Don’t let them silence you: Vote, dammit” in which we are cajoled to vote, to exercise our “solemn right,” Mr. Moyers excoriates those who are engaged in a “nationwide effort to suppress the vote.” These are Republicans — “the right” — who want “to make it hard for minorities, poor folks, and students, among others, to participate in democracy’s most cherished act.” Various state laws have been passed making it harder for voters to register and vote, selectively privileging those who will support the Republican agenda.

Mr. Moyers is quite right. These laws are unjust and biased. And yes they have as their sole purpose the disenfranchisement of those who are a threat to a particular political faction. “And you wonder why so many feel disconnected and disaffected?” asks Mr. Moyers rhetorically.

There is another possible explanation. Perhaps Americans are fed up with being lied to and manipulated, being the victims of the very system they are being asked to endorse by their participation. Maybe they have had enough.

And exactly who are the “good” guys and who are the “bad” guys, and how can one tell

them a part? And isn't foolish, insulting and dangerous to cajole us to vote in elections when it takes \$60 million to become senator and more than a billion to become President and the real outcome represents a threat to the very survival of the planet and the species that inhabit it, the human included?

Clearly the people who run the show — the banksters, the oil magnates, the captains of the war industry, those who profit from flu scares, vaccines and etc. — have no purpose in mind other than the acquisition of ever greater wealth and power at the expense of the rest of us. The current President has done nothing to reverse the criminal behavior of his predecessor and in fact has probably outdone him. So why does it matter whom we vote for or if we vote at all?

George W. Bush certainly did his best to advance the cause of Fascism, starting with the Patriot Act of 2001, which allows for the indefinite detention, without trial of those foreigners deemed to be war combatants. Not to be outdone, President Barack Obama, flying the "liberal" flag, is right behind him with his "Defense Authorization Act of 2012," this time casting a wider net that actually ensnares Americans as well.

President Barack Obama has added two countries to the list of those invaded by the U.S. of A. in the 21st century— Libya and Syria — and has decided to re-invade Iraq, a country he had promised to evacuate. The prison at Guantanamo continues to provide a home for innocent victims of America's righteous war on "terrorism."

And President Barack Obama has his very own hit list of those deemed unfit to live. Drones, remotely controlled by operators stationed thousands of miles away, carefully select their "targets" and with surgically precision excise the offending tissue. Every so often a small child, mother, grandparent is taken out by mistake: collateral damage. And we are being asked to validate and prop up this lethally corrupt system by participating in elections, which under the best of circumstances will only serve to perpetuate the oligarchic form of government they are designed to serve.

So Mr. Moyers, I beg to differ, I think that instead of spending our time debating elections and the merits of the different candidates, waiting out in the cold, at times for hours, after a long day at work, to engage in an act that is futile at best, we should get together to talk about building the foundation for a new form of government, a government that is responsive to the needs of the citizenry, a government that has its basis in social justice because it takes its power from all of us. We should come to accept the fact that we do not now and never have lived in a democracy.

The word "democracy," like the word "love," soothes, blinds, hypnotizes us. Under its spell we become passive, quiescent, thoughtless. Were we to wake up to oligarchy, we would be more watchful, less trusting and possibly more motivated to reform a government that clearly was out of control. It is but a small step to call something by its proper name, but in this case the benefits for humanity could be considerable.

Arthur D. Robbins is the author of *"Paradise Lost, Paradise Regained: The True Meaning of Democracy,"* referred to by Ralph Nader as "An eye-opening, earth-shaking book . . . a fresh, torrential shower of revealing insights and vibrant lessons . . ." and the soon to be released e-book based on Part II of "Paradise Lost" entitled, "Democracy Denied: The Untold Story." Visit acropolis-newyork.com to learn more.

[Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page](#)

[Become a Member of Global Research](#)

Articles by: [Arthur D. Robbins](#)

Disclaimer: The contents of this article are of sole responsibility of the author(s). The Centre for Research on Globalization will not be responsible for any inaccurate or incorrect statement in this article. The Centre of Research on Globalization grants permission to cross-post Global Research articles on community internet sites as long the source and copyright are acknowledged together with a hyperlink to the original Global Research article. For publication of Global Research articles in print or other forms including commercial internet sites, contact: publications@globalresearch.ca
www.globalresearch.ca contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available to our readers under the provisions of "fair use" in an effort to advance a better understanding of political, economic and social issues. The material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving it for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes other than "fair use" you must request permission from the copyright owner.

For media inquiries: publications@globalresearch.ca