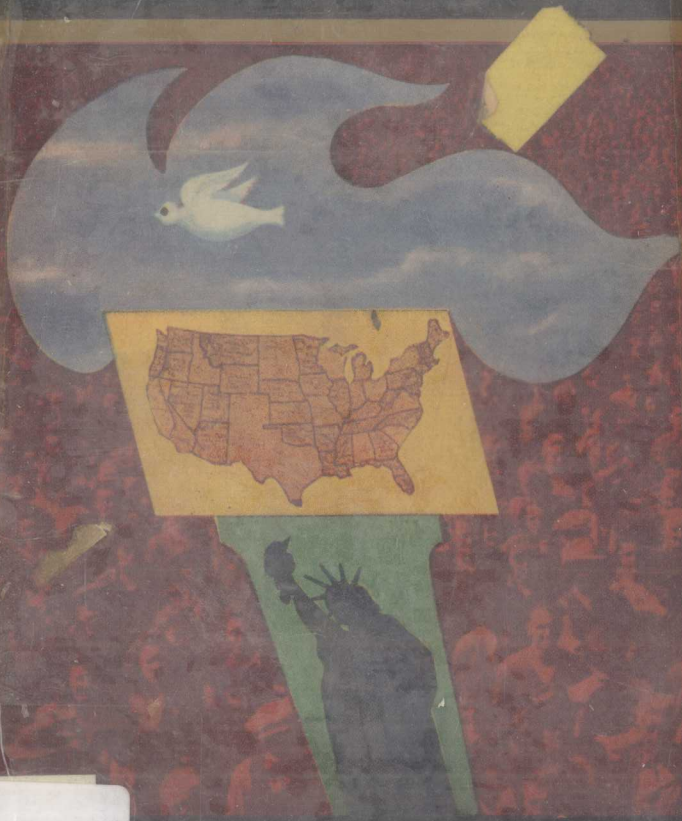


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# THE DEMOCRATIC WAY OF LIFE



*A Mentor Book*

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# The Democratic Way of Life

An American Interpretation

*A New Edition of a Famous Book  
Completely Revised and Expanded*

by T. V. SMITH and  
EDUARD C. LINDEMAN



A MENTOR BOOK

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*The Democratic Way of Life* by T. V. Smith was first published by The University of Chicago Press in 1926. Though this Mentor edition includes part of the original, it is now virtually a new book. T. V. Smith has revised and rewritten much of the original and Eduard C. Lindeman has contributed a substantial new section.

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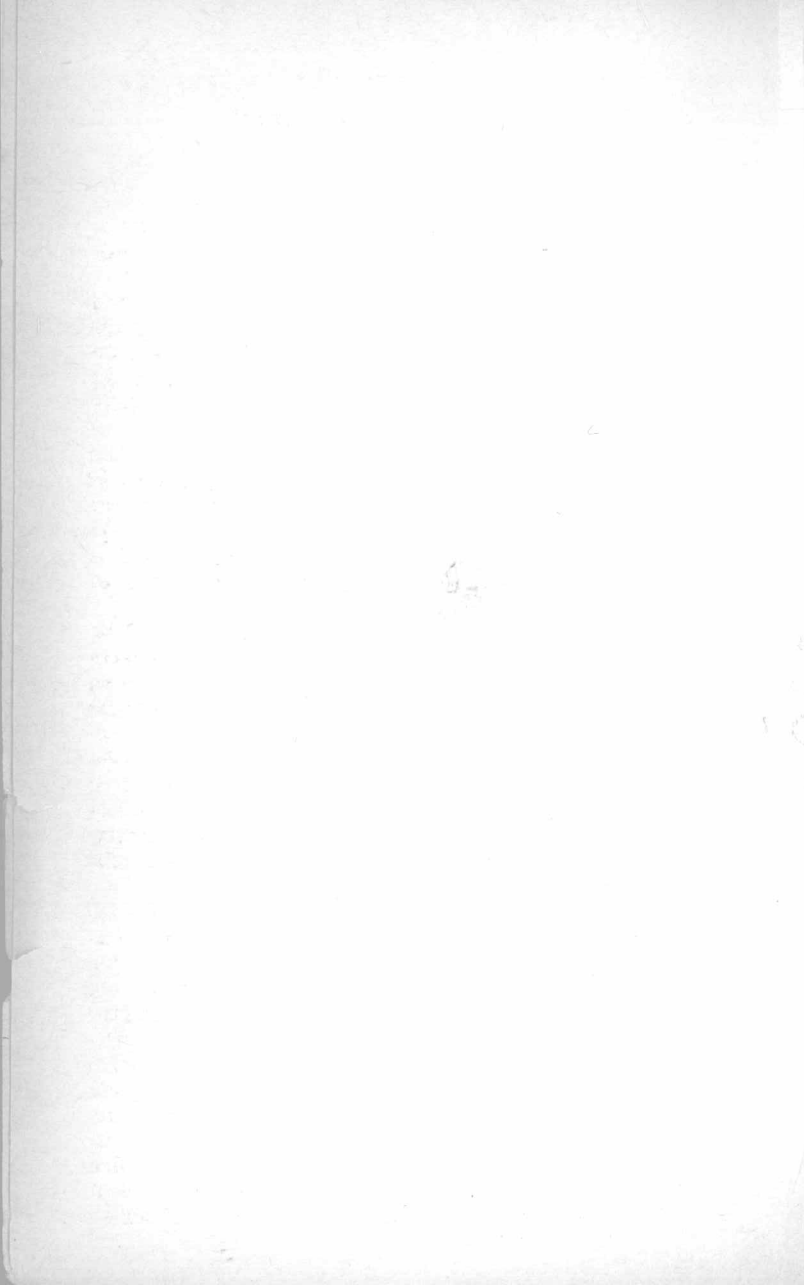
# CONTENTS

## BOOK ONE BY T. V. SMITH

<i>Introduction to Book One</i>	7
CHAPTER ONE	
<i>Democracy as a State of Mind</i>	8
CHAPTER TWO	
<i>The Fraternity Motif</i>	19
CHAPTER THREE	
<i>The Liberty Motif</i>	33
CHAPTER FOUR	
<i>The Equality Motif</i>	50
CHAPTER FIVE	
<i>Democracy as Sportsmanship</i>	65

## BOOK TWO BY EDUARD C. LINDEMAN

<i>Introduction to Book Two</i>	89
PROPOSITION ONE	
<i>Through Diversity Toward Unity</i>	91
PROPOSITION TWO	
<i>Ideals Can Never Be More Than Partially Realized</i>	96
PROPOSITION THREE	
<i>The Means Must Be Consonant With the Ends</i>	100
PROPOSITION FOUR	
<i>Conference Is A Democratic Art</i>	105
PROPOSITION FIVE	
<i>Planning Is the Price of Democratic Survival</i>	109
PROPOSITION SIX	
<i>Democracy Implies Institutional Correlation</i>	114
PROPOSITION SEVEN	
<i>Democracy Is A Conscious Motive In Education</i>	119
<i>Index</i>	124



## *BOOK ONE by T. V. Smith*

### Introduction

Democracy is more than a form of government. It is also a way of life, variegated and full of growth. Like every manifestation of vitality, democracy is many-dimensional. Its leeways are legion. The floor under it is food and clothing and shelter. Men well cared for of body are not looking for pied-pipers whose music is the minstrelsy of doom. Yet no men live by comforts or conveniences alone. Men are spirits and they are as surely oriented upward as bodies are solidly implemented downward. While we as children of Antaeus tread the earth with our feet, we fill our lungs with the ozone of imagination. What we see when we look aloft is ideality pluralizing itself into patterns for the improvement of all things here below. Nothing that exists is really as good as it might be, and even men who think they are as good as they ought to be, are in reality not as good as they ought to be.

If motivation were all push from beneath, men would be but links in a cosmic chain of plasm in a biological succession. Men are indeed units, but they are also essences, with a mission that is upward. Ideals are glints in darkness which light up the sky; and their luminosity pulls men upward as bodily wants push men along. To be pulled by vision is more pleasant than to be pushed by animal urgencies. It is indeed the pleasant pull of ideals which can transform necessity into opportunity and can make a vocation of what otherwise were but the dour face of doom. Beauty alone redeems duty from the tight-lipped desperation of fanaticism.

Ideals are many in form, even if unitary in direction. None are more precious than the trinity of ideals which has become associated with our democratic way of life. Covering all ideals with one, we speak of Justice. But delineating justice, there are Liberty, Equality, Fraternity; and most crucial of these is Equality. The easiest way, for instance, to prevent destruction of liberty by an undertow of license, is to implement liberty with equality for all. The surest way, again, to keep brotherhood from the loving kindness of liquidation, now practiced in all non-democratic lands, is to insist upon fraternity for men who are equally free. This golden mean of ideals will thus safeguard both the liberty-ideal and the fraternity-ideal. As Justice projects these ideals to

the skies of aspiration, so sportsmanship deflects them toward the solid earth of action. Such, at any rate, is the theme to which you are now introduced as the ideological aspect of the democratic way.

This upward thrust of beauty is magnificent but not enough. There is a return impetus of duty.

Downward the voices of duty call,

Downward to toil and be mixed with the main.

I am fortunate to have here the aid of a peer to transform into something more practical a book which in earlier editions was exclusively theoretical. It is, without doubt, a thrilling story, the narrative of what goes on in the minds of men, the story of ideals as such. And it is no unworthy aim for a man to be a good shepherd of his own thoughts. Thrilling as theory is, it is also a throbbing story when thoughts find residence in the deeds of men. I but gesture you toward practice, but Eduard C. Lindeman, in Book II, will show you how to cultivate, as the cultural gardener he is, the goodly land to which Book I points the way.

Together we have hoped to re-vivify, in the face of growing danger, the vision of life which for centuries has brightened the prospects of Western man. It is something to dignify common life with the noble qualities which in death have made men heroic. That men will die for what they will not live for, we have often enough observed at war. That men will live for what they do not think worth dying for, is an inescapable observation today. But that men may become so unified of energies and so disciplined of character that they will both gladly live and nobly die—this is a faith in the light of which we both have labored and for the sake of which we do here and now offer you this book.

July 4, 1950

T.V.S.

## CHAPTER ONE

### Democracy as a State of Mind

I once was state senator in the General Assembly of Illinois from a Chicago district half Negro in numbers and much more so in preoccupation. The season was at the depth of the Depression of the 1930's. I was invited to attend a meeting one night devoted to a public discussion of this subject: "The 49th State." There was widespread agitation in Harlem and Chicago for adding to the Union another political unit

for the benefit of the Negroes alone. A magazine was being published to promote the Cause, taking its title from the project itself, *The 49th State*. The editor of the magazine presided at the rally in question, introducing various Negro speakers to explain different aspects of the utopian enterprise.

I was pressed eventually as to my own disposition toward the proposal. Seeking, as is politically characteristic in America, to keep myself on the popular side, I was pushed from strategic obfuscation to ambivalence of attitude, and from that into the admission that I was actually against the scheme, not seeing (as I said apologetically) where the land was to come from for the new State. "Illinois," I said, "will not vote it to you. I think my native state of Texas cannot be counted upon, however oversized it may appear. And I hardly believe that you expect land from Mississippi."

After deprecating such objection as trivial, the presiding officer raised himself above "irrelevancies," as he would have it, and announced that I had missed altogether the point of the meeting. "We have not mentioned land," said he, "and for a very good reason. So long as the prevailing attitude of the majority toward the Negro minority continues, no amount of land would do the minority any good. If a spirit of justice arose, no more land would be needed. The new state has, for a fact, nothing whatsoever to do with land. The 49th state," he concluded with finality, looking at me, "*is a state of mind!*"

I commend now to others the lesson my Negro constituent then taught me.

*Democracy itself is, in truth, "a state of mind." It is a state of mind, first, of and toward the majority. It is a state of mind, second, toward and of the minority. It is a state of mind, finally and fundamentally, by and for the individual.*

For the sake of proper perspective, let us approach the amplification of this threefold thesis by making clear that every form of government is, likewise, a state of mind. An English woman was once asked the date of an important event in British imperial history. She replied that she did not know the exact year but that it was the time "the prince had the measles." A monarchy is possible when men have minds for it, and the depth of its solidity is, as in England, equal to the attachment men and women feel for its persons and symbolism. What men set their clocks by, so to say, has become important in if not organic to the total life of that people.

The world wondered once how Hitler had become and could remain the leader of the German people. His doctrines were clearly absurd, his techniques unquestionably bizarre, and

his morals literally diabolical. How could such a man become a leader and constitute himself the operative symbol of a powerful state and of a great people? Only let enough people believe the same thing at the same time, and this belief becomes the bedrock fact of their lives. When men's minds become sufficiently polluted, or purified, their polity follows in its train. As the typical citizen thinketh in his heart, so is the State.

Communism is the continuing example of a political power founded in the minds of men. How can the State be systematically treated as an instrument of violence? By having men with violence in their minds possess and operate its machinery. If nothing of justice can arise save through struggle—and the worst kind of struggle at that, *class* struggle—then you have a government founded in enmity and devoted to violence. Such a government will stir enmity up where it finds it not, in order that outer forms (of power) may match the inner festering of morbid minds.

### *Majority Will as the Democratic Way*

The easiest conception of democracy is political: that of a government, namely, in which the majority has its way. This is not only easy but is also sound. It is sound, first, because no society is possible without government and it is sound, second, because since a government cannot be of all (though it may be *for* all), it is better for it to be of as many as possible. So complicated, however, is the subject, even when made as easy of meaning as may be, that for a government to be sound, this majority aspect of it must go along with certain other characteristics that invest its logical soundness with human safety. Having planted this position as one to which we may return, let us now proceed to see how majority right is indispensable to the democratic way of life. In doing this we shall also see how much more than politics is involved in the democratic way, though how politics also is indispensable.

It would require a most cavalier attitude indeed not to count a majority as indispensable for democracy; for the very word itself organizes thought around "demos" (the people). But democracy is not merely something with reference to the majority of people; it is the operation of the majority will, subject to such limitations as we shall adduce. It is necessary to make this point once more clear because the Communists are trying in our generation to monopolize the very terminology of freedom while destroying, and in order to destroy, the fact of freedom. The way they seek a monopoly here in the field of definition, is to claim

that they also are for the majority. They prostitute the ideal involved by making it *for* as distinguished from "by" or even "of." Hiding under the sacred and sound notion of majority rule, they subvert the notion while professing to honor it. Government with them cannot be *of* the majority because to them the majority of men are either corrupt or incompetent or both. By what genesis then—that of Lysenko?—is the ruling elite—the negligible percentage of party members—uncorrupt and competent? That they are indeed corrupted by power appears from the fact that they have strengthened the State and have no present thought of letting it "wither away," which alone by their own theory would justify the original seizure of power.

The democratic way implies the conviction on the part of both the majority and the minority that the majority has the right to rule, but also the acceptance by the majority of the duty to exercise this right, and to exercise it circumspectly.

Governing is a pain as well as a privilege. There are people who want the prestige which comes from a conspicuous place but who do not want its pains. To have the governmental symbol used merely for display, however, degrades it for everybody. Those who accept the right to rule must accept the responsibility which attends the right. Or, to put the matter in general perspective, danger to freedom can flow from weak government as well as from strong government. There are friends of democracy who think the greater danger to reside in weakness. Without taking sides, we must register the view that for democracy to fulfil its mission those who have the prestige must be of a mind to suffer its pains as well as to enjoy its benefits.

As touching the majority, then, democracy is the state of mind which leads it to accept the duty of formulating public policy. Somebody has to do this. Why not the majority? It is perhaps enough at this place to say that the majority has the right to rule simply because there are more people in than out of it. Individuals, as we shall see, are what count; and so more of them count for more than do less of them. So much for the right, at a most elementary level. The state of mind which enables the majority to accept this, and the minority to award it, is the double democratic mentality. What the majority claims, the minority concedes, and that is sufficient. It is a state of mind of, and a state of mind toward, the majority.

But this is not enough, not even in its doubled aspect. If it were enough, there would not be a succession of friends of the democratic way, from John Stuart Mill to Lord Bryce, who fear "the tyranny of the majority" hardly less than the

tyranny of a dictator. In a pinch and as a matter of sheer brute strength, the majority makes a strong bid for first place, even in a mechanized age. Not even tyrants can overlook quantity in bidding for dominance. The dominance of the majority is no mere possibility; it is always a danger. And the danger is enhanced by the gregariousness of us all: it is easy to feel infallible when everybody around is of the same mind. Cattle gather in herds in time of danger, and men lose the curse of insecurity when banded together in great numbers. There is little doubt that Hitler had at times, if not usually, a majority back of him. This was also true of Mussolini and is now of Stalin. A majority can even vote a dictatorship which, in putting down the enemies of the "state," puts the majority itself in a condition of vassalage.

### *The Minority Right in the Democratic Way*

What is required to be added to the state of mind of and toward the majority, then, in order to constitute properly the democratic way? There are two formulations now to be added to our characterization.

The first is a state of mind toward and of the minority. The second is a state of mind toward the minority on the part of the majority. This is indispensable: indispensable that the majority in addition to accepting rule as its right and duty should maintain an attitude of *noblesse oblige* toward the minority, toward any and every law-obeying group less than itself. This will be most manifest with reference to the political minority which represents the open opposition, in parliament or in legislative assembly. In our British background it has developed and is called: "His Majesty's Loyal Opposition."

Every word in the title is significant. "Opposition" it is, both in the sense of working to prevent majority measures from becoming laws, and in seeking to get itself accepted as law-maker instead of the prevailing majority. "Loyal" it is, because it itself is, as we have said, of the state of mind to accept the majority as constituted until it can supplant it. "His Majesty's" indicates that the minority is of a mind, in opposing the majority and in becoming a majority, to obey the rules of the game, both in its opposing and in its aspiring.

It is because of the minority's state of mind toward the majority, as described, that the majority can have toward the minority the state of mind here indicated. Minority groups that submit to majority rule only out of fear will excite fear in the majority. Those that express hostility, in subterfuge to begin with and in sabotage to end with, invite upon themselves a majority attitude that is as undemocratic as it is

natural. Minorities that arm themselves, as Hitler's early minions did, or enrobe themselves, as the American Ku Klux Klan sometimes does, and seek to supplant the majority by force, disquiet the majority's state of mind, and invite its wrath upon them. A proper attitude on their part toward the majority alone makes possible a continued democratic attitude toward the minority on the part of the majority. So inter-related, however, are all states of mind in a given society that the opposite is equally true: only a proper attitude on the part of the majority makes possible, in the first place, that the opposition furnished by the minority will be "loyal," indicating through its very opposition the democratic spirit.

The proper state of mind of the minority is, however, not only *toward* but *of*. Its attitude is toward itself. It accepts itself as legitimate and as fruitful. Democratic minorities are above all self-respecting. The only way to maintain self-respect in the long run is to be worthy of respect. Democratic minorities see themselves as useful as well as rightful. The exercise of their right is involved in the discharge of their duty. This duty is to clarify alternative courses of public policy so that the people will not become narrow-minded and so shut themselves off from their own good. As long as honest men differ as to what is right to be done, or just to be endured, so long somebody has to make clear other courses and to recommend them persuasively. Moreover, continuous criticism of the proposals and the application of these proposals to practice keeps the majority more alive to its own meanings and more alert to its own prospective pitfalls. This state of mind of the "ruling" minority is as necessary as, and is no less helpful than, that of the "ruling" majority in a democratic society.

By inserting the word "ruling," we can pass properly from the over-simplification thus far indulged to a more extensive survey of the minority enterprise in a democracy. The role of the minority is not confined to the function of "ruling." There are many, many minorities; not merely the political one.

It is necessary to have this multiplicity of groupings in a democratic society, and it is necessary to respect it. To have it is necessary, for there are many and sundry human purposes. Any purpose that is shared, even by two, can become the nucleus for prosperous grouping. Born of liberty, such grouping fructifies liberty. Men discover their capacities in trying them out upon those likeminded enough to be forbearing. Free human groupings are but the ways of seeing the full reach of our talents: how many things we can feel, think, and do. By this token all learn that men can share what they

FREEDOM  
OF ASSEMBLY

have, can freely associate for the sharing, and can organize to promote whatever ends the sharing recommends as useful.

Beginning with marriage, the most common form of human association, and ending with the United Nations, we have, in between, literally millions of organizations larger than the family but smaller than the national state. Fidelity is the bond of the smallest organization and sovereignty the bond of the largest. The nature of the bond, like the size of the unit, varies greatly in free societies. From mere friendliness to coercion the gamut of human groupings runs. A certain degree of likemindedness must be prevalent, the state having the thinnest degree and friendship or family having the highest degree of common purpose.

How many there are, who can say?—more than a million in the United States of the business type, formally organized and legally recognized. The number is not important, but the existence of diverse purpose and the right to organize around any and every purpose is of the last consequence in the democratic way. The denial of this right, or the hampering of the privilege, marks the absence, or the decadence of the democratic spirit. In societies where one State, or even one Church, is both jealous of other organizations and possesses power, or even ambition, to implement the jealousy against minority groups—there, to that extent, the democratic state of mind is lacking.

To summarize: a forbearing attitude *toward* the minority on the part of the majority which wields the secular power or commands sacerdotal influence is indispensable for the democratic way. This follows from the fact that the purposes of men vary and that many purpose are not fulfilled apart from organization. It is not too much to say, with Aristotle, that men are both social and political animals; that indeed one of the dominant purposes of life is to associate, even apart from fulfilling other purposes through the association. The right to organize into groups arises from the fact that men's capacities are not fulfilled, or even disclosed, apart from these social necessities. Men have a right to organize, and the recognition and protection of this right on the part of a controlling majority is bed-rock foundation for democracy. The indulgence of this right by the performance of this duty goes not without its rewards. Majorities get their strength from the flexibility of diverse purpose and the implementation of the diversity. A loyal state of mind on the part of each and every minority nursed on forbearance is itself sinewy in strength. In free societies, they also serve who only sit and criticize, provided they do it with the spirit of improvement and with willingness to turn to common account

any power that may come to them. It is a dangerous sign in democracy for the "average citizen" ensconced in his safe minorities to think, as Margaret Mead says he now thinks, "of power as wielded by *THEM*." Minorities must be responsible in order to remain safe.

*The Finality of the Individual in the Democratic Way*

The majority is made up of individuals. So what we have said of that state of mind, is said of the individual. Minorities are made up of individuals. So what we have said of those states of mind, is said of individuals. Because both sets of sayings are of "states of mind," they involve and concern the individual peculiarly, since he alone of all our entities *has* a mind. A state of mind is dependent upon there being a mind; and the individual, metaphor apart, is alone possessor of a mind. From this fact all things flow, and to its depreciation all adverse things contribute. There is indeed loose talk about group-minds. Before crediting such talk beyond the purposes of poetry we would be well advised to find the individual or individuals who stand to profit personally from the attribution of mind to groups. This caution is a counsel of basic prudence to begin with, and may well be a matter of scientific integrity to end with.

Not only is the individual the only unit with a mind, he is also the only political unit that has a heart. Groups do not feel any more than they think, though they facilitate less thinking and more feeling on the part of members. When we attribute feeling to groups as such, we scale down the fineness of individual feeling to the level of what is well enough described as the mob-spirit, though this but denominates the inferiority of feelings which individuals have in groups. Individuals who can hide behind groups, attributing to the groups rather than to themselves the feelings operative, can thus evade responsibility for the most sadistic impulses known to man.

All that Adolf Hitler did, he did in the name and for the professed sake of "the German people." That he was a sickened soul the world knew and now fully realizes. But it was not enough for him to be sick. His malaise had to be attributed to the collectivity, and in its name the sad malady had to work itself out to nausea world-wide. It was not Hitler, the individual, who purged his "friends"; it was the German People. It was not Hitler who made himself an anti-Jewish devil; it was the German People. It was not Hitler who made a beast of himself in the concentration camps; it was the German People. It was not Hitler who plunged the entire world into war, with its wrecked national economies, its millions

of dead, its ten millions of crippled or impaired, and its debasement of the impulses of men everywhere—not Hitler; this was the German People.

So it goes. So it went with Mussolini also. So it went with Stalin as well. Not until in millions of individual minds, however, is a purpose common, can a leader effect that purpose, though it be his purpose originally and though he planted it in their minds. Not until in millions of breasts, where the heart is supposed to be, is heartlessness, can the horrid infliction of pain proceed in police headquarters and the merciless abuse of human dignity and rights proceed as it does in every government not founded upon both the rights and the duty of the majority, upon both the duty and the rights of minorities.

Neither of these circumspections, however, is possible without a third: *the finality of the individual*. No majority will be of the democratic state of mind with reference to minorities until it sees through the group miasma to the individuals who make up the minorities. No minority will be of the democratic state of mind with reference to the majority, or indeed with reference to other minorities, until it sees through the group miasmas to the individuals who constitute the majority and who make up all minority groups. It is the individual who stands always at the heart of the entire enterprise. He alone can invest anything with a state of mind, because he alone has a mind. He alone can invest anybody with tenderness, wistfulness, pathos; because he alone has a heart.

What any tyrant does to an individual is secondary to, and consequent upon, the deeper wrong he has already done to individuality: he has already ignored the individual as the final source of all value. That is the ultimate ignominy, and the wise man will not wonder at, but merely grieve over, any degradation which follows thereupon. As ignominy reaches its nadir in ignoring the ultimate, so glory achieves its zenith in honoring the ultimate. Positively speaking, there flows from the individual all the good that is possible; for in the individual reside all the values there are. Guard well, therefore, individual integrity, for out of it are all the issues of life.

While we have been ascribing democracy to the state of mind, never obscured has been the fact that the way men feel is of more intimate importance to our democratic enterprise than the way they think. We have over-simplified with a shorthand which must not be turned to longhand. Thinking and feeling can never be wholly separated, and "states of mind" cover both, but with over-emphasis upon the cognitive or logical aspect of human nature. This aspect we must now diminish before returning to our final emphasis, the