

Do We Still Live in a Democracy?

The high school definition of Democracy is a government elected by the people to serve the interests of the electors. A more sophisticated analysis labels the United States as having a Republican form of government. We vote for individuals who represent regions or groups and beyond that most of us do not become involved in any direct rule of law.

We no longer live in a Democracy and we do not have a Republican form of government. Rather, we live in a Monocracy. If you look it up on Google, it is defined as; "a system of government by only one person." The definition is a misnomer.

We live in a country where our emotions and therefore our votes are manipulated by money. The amount of money spent on the current campaign will be shocking, even to Americans used to having their votes bought. In one Senatorial contest alone, more than \$100 million will be spent. Just imagine the good purposes those funds could be used for.

We are flooded daily with e-mails and text messages, and our pleas to "unsubscribe" are ignored. Those who are marketing the candidates rely upon the Reptilian model. The reptile is said not to think, but rather to react out of fear. We are manipulated by fear, emotion and psychology. Interspersed with the campaign to manipulate our decisions based upon fear are so-called "positive" messages which are really nothing more than a different kind of psychological appeal.

Neuropsychology is all the rage. The movement started thanks to a book entitled *Emotional Intelligence*. It is now a science. *Psychology Today* defines the term as the ability to identify and manage one's own emotions and, most interestingly, the emotions of others. Instead of examining a person's intelligence quotient, their problem-solving ability and whether they are able to retain information, political advertisers developed the means to understand, and most importantly manage emotions. Sometimes this is done with focus groups, but even that is old technology.

The current approach to electing a candidate is to find out what the voter fears and what causes the voter to feel positive emotions. Those qualities are not difficult to discern using modern artificial intelligence through social media feedback. The salesman for the political figurehead wants to know what you are afraid of and what makes you want to buy one detergent over another.

My father, may his soul rest in peace, once told me that the greatest talent was that of a salesman. He pointed out that anyone who is successful in life is a competent salesman. He had a point. He worked in the political establishment himself and knew a thing or two about what motivates voters. He came from a background of sales and fully appreciated what works.

Once upon a time, when I was newly married, we went antique shopping. I saw something I wanted to buy, but it was much too expensive. I told the salesman that the

model ship in his window was priced much too high. The guy practically threw me out of his store. My father, who had witnessed the exchange, came over to me and said: "You're a bad salesman. You should have told him that the antique was worth more than you wanted to pay not less." We talked about it outside the store and after about a half hour of walking around, I went back in. I apologized to the salesman and told him that I really did want to buy the antique, but I was just starting out in my profession and it was really too much for me. He wound up selling it to me for half the price.

What I was taught to do by my Dad was to manipulate the emotions of the salesman by complimenting him and presenting myself in a sympathetic light, a hard thing to do for a young lawyer.

Both candidates in the current election are using modern psychological techniques backed by profound amounts of money, to buy the election. Joe Biden's handlers have done a magnificent job presenting him as the "nice guy" juxtaposed to the barbarian Trump. The promises made by the candidates are completely out of proportion to any reality, but it does not matter. The bigger and more outrageous the promise, the more attention it gets. It buys into both the fear and the need to optimism. Listen to the candidates. Their main message is that terrible things will happen to you, if you do not vote for them. Terrible things mean disease, war, unemployment, and most of all, uncertainty. Voting for the candidate will bring prosperity, calm, and "a chicken in every pot," as President Hoover's opponents claimed that the incumbent promised. Whether President Herbert Hoover really said that is besides the point.

In every election we rant and rave about how much money is spent. The falsehoods cascade like Niagara Falls and the so-called fact checkers cannot even keep up with all the trash talk. More importantly, most people do not really care what the facts really are. What we care about is who looks like we would want to have a beer with them, who massages our bruised egos and whose promises assuage our fears and fulfill our expectations.

What is the antidote to all this? We used to say the answer was education and political involvement. That is passe'. Would publicly funded elections change the matrix? It would probably help, but it would still not prevent the marketing of candidates utilizing modern psychological techniques. Unfortunately, the populous has not become more discerning. When Julius Caesar abolished the Senate in Rome and declared himself God over the Empire, he was doing nothing more than instilling fear and hope in the restless population, both at the same time.

Today every politician seeks both demonic control and God-like status. While we all know the problem, no one has the cure. No operation Warp Speed is going to cure the political malaise which leads to ever increasing disrespect to government.

What follows from government that people lose confidence in a loss of the last vestiges of Democracy. Monocracy will control until We The People decide otherwise.

Get out and vote, but leave your fears and your overenergized expectations at home.

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