



REVIEW ARTICLE

**Buffin de Chosal, Christophe. 2017. *The End of Democracy*.
Translated by Ryan P. Plummer. Arcadia: Tumbler House.**

Muhammad Ahsan*

Whenever in the next century a serious historian worth his salt sits down to take the measure of our day and age, his verdict will spare us hardly any compliments. The overt bureaucratisation coupled with the smashing of natural hierarchical order of existence has significantly increased technocratic encroachment upon our communitarian lives. The difference between the social and the political has more or less vanished. Today, the balance that had been so crucial in yesteryears amongst various sectors of organised life has evaporated. As Heidegger warned at the beginning of the last century, the calculative mind has decisively superseded the meditative one. The dominant theme of the age perceives human beings more as motel dwellers than as ethno-cultural species wedded to their respective soil.

Nevertheless, there is still stiff resistance in the Orient where formidable forces, religion/tradition being one of them, limit the space of political bureaucratisation. On the other hand, the Occident barring some Orthodox territories are now in free fall. The virulent, unchecked spread of consumerist cosmopolitanism has left the inhabitants completely cut off from their historical roots. The unease in some sections is palpable and the *End of Democracy* is one articulation of this teleological discomfort. It is an English translation of a French treatise published under the name *Le Fin de Democracia*. Its author, Christophe Buffin de Chosal, is a Belgian historian most of whose work remains unknown in the Anglophone world.

Now, the reader must first appreciate the geographic context of this book before getting into its contents. The catastrophic disorders of the late 18th

* Mr. Muhammad Ahsan, Research Associate at the Area Study Centre for Europe, University of Karachi. Email: mahometus@hotmail.com.

century, the consequent Napoleonic consolidation, the systematic asphyxiation of the Roman Catholic church, the perpetual struggle between the royalists and republicans with the latter trouncing the former etc., all played out on the plains that lie just across the southern Belgian frontier. Till this day, the traumatic resonance of those events rankles sensitive and sober intellects whose words betray a painful longing for the spiritual stability that got lost under the hubris of Renaissance and Enlightenment.

The volume comprises of just 161 pages. Its brevity and short size keep an interested hand engaged page after page. As mentioned earlier, it is the translated version that is under review here, and, therefore, there is a possibility that the original version might have different dimensions.

The publisher of this work, Tumblar House, is a proudly Catholic bookstore. According to its mission statement, it is committed to spread the word of the gospel. It mainly produces titles on Catholic and monarchical subjects. Hence, the ultimate point of reference becomes obvious, and we, as readers, can easily contextualise the sociocultural parameters of the themes presented in this book.

The foreword by Charles Coulombe, himself a devout Catholic and a monarchist, is a perfect preamble to prepare oneself for the road ahead. He beautifully summarises the present times and the need for such a body of work. We come to know that Mr. de Chosal has ancestral connections to the Belgian nobility, and that our author remains a serious man of faith. These features appear quite banal in any other context, but in terms of 21st Western Europe, where the Christian faith has itself become an exotic entity thanks to some devastating self-inflicted own goals, they can be deemed as almost subversive and revolutionary.

The book formally begins with the words,

Democracy is not just a political system. It is much more, and its nature approaches that of the gods if we consider with how much respect it is treated and with what devotion it is honoured. The idolatrous character of democracy is clearly seen in the absolute refusal to question it in any way.¹

¹ Chosal, Christophe Buffin de, Ryan P. Plummer, and Christophe Buffin de Chosal. "Introduction." In *The End of Democracy*, 7. Arcadia, CA: Tumblar House, 2017.

A human concoction has attained metaphysical dimensions. How can it be possible? We seemed to have been progressing. What kind of a progress is it when one of its own creations becomes unquestionable? This glaring contradiction in the progressivist school of thought is conveniently forgotten with the dark glasses of 'modernity'. Moreover, as Mr. de Chosal makes it clear in this introductory section, the project undertaken here is not to get lost in the labyrinth of alternatives. The one and only objective of his book is to unravel the structural weaknesses of this mode of governance and its subsequent negative effects on the overall stability of our civilised lives.

The succeeding chapter titled, 'The "Self-Ruling" People', takes us back into time. The author questions the wisdom behind 'revolutionary' ideas that sought to weaken 'absolute' monarchs so as to compel them to concede space to 'the people'. In actuality, according to the author, the newly emerging educated bourgeoisie was demanding transference of power in its favour in the name of the ephemeral 'people'. Henry VIII's methodical destruction of the religious establishments indirectly strengthened the hand of the parliamentary forces. In the very next century, when Charles I tried to reclaim some of that lost space, it triggered a civil war, which ended in the defeat of royalist forces with the King facing the execution squad. The events in Britannia then inspired a generation across the Channel. The Gallic Cromwell's intended to repeat the same sequel of events in their domain. In their misplaced zeal, the 'enlightenment' writers focused too much on the 'individual' whose atomised existence would pave the way for more absolutism and not less. The incessant attacks on the Church, whose irregularities notwithstanding, crippled a powerful counterbalancing force which could've resisted royal or bourgeois absolutism. It was the organic equilibrium among the peasantry, landed nobility, the Church, and the bourgeoisie which ensured guarded an individual from oppression from any other sector of the society. Once it was disturbed, it was nearly impossible to arrest the disorder. People were self-ruling as long as they were not uprooted and reduced to quantifiable chattel in the vicious game of Machiavellian bargaining by the Robespierre of the world.

The next three chapters deal with the deception of the present democratic systems operating in the West. They expose the extremely oligarchic nature of this mode of governance. An oligarchy seeks legitimacy in the form of universal adult franchise. In the words of the author, this organised minority then rules over the disorganised majority. The majority remains scattered

divided into various factions. Also, there are certain lobbying groups constantly using the factional chaos to further their interests monetary or otherwise. In the absence of powerful supra-political forces (religion, kinship ties etc.), it is quite difficult to resist this onslaught. If a political faction gains power through adult franchise on the promise to grease as many palms as possible, it would only be logical that it aims at more centralisation of power at the expense of individual liberty. Note that *liberty* is always more social than political and its expression need not to be through political war gaming. Interestingly, it is the temptation to enter the political arena that ultimately reduces liberty and increases dependence on the bureaucratic behemoth. Private preferences and segregations begin to be influenced by the 'will of the majority'. This 'electoral majority' should not be confused with the majoritarian cultural ethos of a society. There is a chance that these two majorities might clash as for instance in the case of laws and judicial precedents that aim to alter the traditional and historical trajectories of a society. Abortion, free unions, sexual deviances, forced racial integration, etc., all become 'legitimate' with the backing of a political majority or an 'enlightened' and 'progressive' judicial arm. If there is nothing non-negotiable then everything becomes negotiable. Then, there are economic and commercial repercussions when a democratic state that consolidates power in the name of 'Welfare'. It makes a significant portion of the population dependent on its largesse that generates intra-social fissures. Furthermore, the exigencies of byzantine power struggles inherent in unhinged electoral politics exacerbate social mistrust among different peoples. At the moment, if we look closely, the United States of America is going through a similar phase.

The chapter on the European Union is a revised version of an essay written back in 2012 in Dutch. It takes no prisoners. The author considers the Union as a manifestation of organised technocratic corruption, which is being financed by the taxpayer. He compares it with the Soviet Union. The army of bureaucrats, parliamentary members, commissioners, lobbyists, propagandists, etc., all make the Brussels dispensation a supranational octopus controlling the various polities through its multiple limbs. We are presented with some instances of financial scandals involving members of the European parliament and the lavish lifestyles of these members who dwell in their own alternative universe much to the chagrin of those whom they claim to 'represent'.

In the opinion of this reviewer, the populist anger against the Union oligarchy has hitherto taken the electoral route, but if pushed to the wall, this revulsion might translate itself in not so civilised a manner.

The next two chapters deals with the political spectrum that ranges from Right to Left and the resultant degeneration that the author labels 'Decivilization'. He briefly lists the highlights of the Communist Manifesto and then briskly analyses each in the light of our present political realities. This swift examination reveals an astonishing result which is that parliamentary democracy has accommodated both the Marxist and its supposed opponents. The oligarchic trickery has managed to elevate economics to the centre stage thereby constraining the jostling factions to keep their focus singularly in the direction of commercial maximization. In other words, the Left-Right dichotomy has vanished. The 'Right' in the West today merely gives lip service to issues that once used to be at its very core. The cultural decay of the last seventy years occurred mainly because the Right chose to look the other way. Democracy converted the Western civilisation into a museum of sorts where we take our families in free time for some fun and frolics. The breakdown in ethno-cultural solidarity has pulled the rug out from under the feet of Western Europeans who are in a state of intellectual vertigo.

Being the product of national traditions, which carry centuries of evolution within them, the State's greatest responsibility is to guard and uphold these traditions. It must not succumb to private interests and appropriate for itself the authority to reconfigure the dynamics of its parent society. It is a tremendously crucial point which if gets blurred would twist our grasp of the whole issue here. The democratic state in the West has abjectly failed to fulfil its civilizational responsibilities.

However, this reviewer would like to add that citizenry too have refused to abandon hedonism and thus becoming lab rats for the emboldened state to use them at it sees fit. The blame should also be laid at the door of a highly self-indulgent and spiritually susceptible population.

The last segment titled, 'Future Prospects', paints a gloomy picture. It fleetingly touches upon the formidable challenges the Islamic world poses in terms of culture since the continent hosts a significant portion of its diaspora. Centuries ago, it was the force of Christianity that stemmed the

tide of Turkic and Arab-Berber incursions. It kept the West culturally alive. Today, the same communities live in the West as full citizens. They have their minarets firmly rooted on the Western soil. For how long will the democratic-bureaucratic oligarchy be able to keep ignoring nativist anger which has now come on the surface? The coming decades might have an answer for this question.

As the author specifies in the introduction, the reader should not search for solutions in this volume because it exclusively examines the socio-cultural rot that set in as a result of universal adult franchise. However, if we read between the lines, we can easily come to the conclusion that salvation might lie in re-energized monarchies in alliance with religious piety. Presently, the West has scandalized royalties and widespread socio-cultural disorder. How that will change is anybody's guess.

Let us end this review with a quotation by Erik von Kuehnelt-Leddihn with which the author begins his book,

'Sometime in the coming century, people will rack their brains pondering how nations with tremendous scientific and intellectual achievements could have given uninstructed and untrained men and women the right to vote equally uninstructed and untrained people into responsible positions.'