

**UNIDAD EDUCATIVA PARTICULAR JAVIER  
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**MONOGRAPH  
DEMOCRACY IN THE ANCIENT GREECE AND ITS INFLUENCE IN TODAY'S  
SOCIETY**

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## GRATITUDE

I'd like to thank my family for supporting me in following my dreams, because they are always there, advising me and feeling proud of my accomplishments, I'd also like to thank them for making me who I am and for giving me all the love in the world. I thank my teachers too for passing by their acknowledgments to us and for being patient because teaching is not an easy task. I want to thank my friends because they have encouraged me to do my very best and they have always been there for me trying to help with everything they can. And last but not least, I thank God for every opportunity he presents in my life and for blessing me with a great family and amazing friends.

## SUMMARY

Democracy is a governmental system of great importance, therefore, knowing its origins is fundamental to apply it correctly in our society. This monograph delves into the origins of democracy and its influence in today's society as the title says. We take a look into topics like extracts of the origins of democracy, which is the first chapter, where we observe and analyze a historian and a philosopher to understand better how this system used to be in ancient Greece, also another one of the topics is the impact of democracy nowadays, this chapter is about how democracy is applied in the actual world and countries with a full democracy system. The third chapter talks about how our society feels about this governmental system and the importance it gives to it, also the problems it faces, like the biggest one, corruption. The last chapter is an analysis of an interview about the opinions of teachers that have the acknowledgment in areas like history, philosophy, and citizenship to get people's opinion about democracy and upgrades that could be made to make it better and more developed taking into consideration that we are an evolving society. The purpose of this study is to understand the emergence of democracy and the impact it had on society, as well as to evolve over time to adapt to new generations and also to know its influence. This research has the purpose of being able to really know this form of social organization and thus to take into account its relevant importance in society and how we have come to evolve together with it to apply it properly in different situations that can be present not just in political stuff for our countries but also in our daily lives.

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## INTRODUCTION

The following monographic work is an investigation about Democracy in the ancient Greece and its influence in today's society, which has a purpose of learning the origins of this governmental system and understanding how it had an impact on the world's political systems. Democracy was born in the ancient Greece Athens, and now it's a global system that is used to in many political exercises.

The study of democracy has a great importance in a society because is necessary to understand how it works to apply it correctly when it is needed, when a person isn't aware of the importance and impact it can have in their community they are being part of the problem of not letting this system work how its supposed to, that's why is so important to have the bases of this governamental must to help society progress.

There are other authors of books especially that have treated topics that have a lot in common with this monographs, for example, Paul Cartledge in his book *"Origins of democracy in the ancient Greece"*, and others. Democracy is the eldest government system in the world and the most recognized one because of its effectiveness in political areas, for example when its used for elections in a country.

This monograph is consists of four chapters, the first one is about extracts of the origins of democracy and it is an analysis of the opinions of a historian an a philosopher



that was present in Athens of the 5th century, followed by the second chapter which is about the impact of democracy where you can find about countries with full democracy system and how they apply it to make it work so well, the third is named Democratic society, this chapter is about how the actual world gives importance or not to governmental systems like this one and how corruption is the biggest problem it faces. The last chapter is an analysis of an interview that was realized to have different opinions of democracy and improvements that can be done because we are an evolving world and everything needs to be currently actualized to have a better function.

## CHAPTER I

### EXTRACTS OF THE ORIGINS OF DEMOCRACY

#### 1.1. Philosophers and historians point of view about democracy in the 5th century

As we all know philosophers and historians were extremely important in the ancient Greece, knowing their point of view is the only way to understand how democracy worked in the 5th century. Most people in Athens had many professions, so it's understandable to say that philosophers and historians also participated in many other things, and of course in politics.

I've decided to focus in the fifth-century because this was the period of political hegemony and good economic status in Athens. In this period lived many important persons that are still recognized nowadays, like the playwrights Sophocles and Euripides, historians such as Polybius, Herodotus, Thucydides and the philosopher Socrates. And to get more into the topic of democracy and politics, we know that Momigliano (s.f.) quoted by Canevaro (2018) once remarked, "fifth-century Athens was to him a distant, unattractively democratic world."

### **1.1.1 Polybius thoughts about democracy in the 5th century**

To understand democracy is necessary to understand also the history of Athens and how the state was working with this governmental system, because as we all know, democracy in those times was not as we know it nowadays.

Polybius was an important Greek historian of the Hellenistic period, he is known for his analysis of the constitutions and powers that had the government. He claims that in the 5<sup>th</sup> century there was a lack of democracy in Athena, but how is this possible if Athens is where democracy began?

The concept that was given to democracy was based on two principles, equality and freedom of speech (these two are still important in modern democracy), Polybius agreed completely to these terms, but he considered democracy more than that, he even believed that the word democracy was the most positive in the vocabulary, and as we can notice he took politics as a very strict thing and wanted things to follow their rules. He had many thoughts about the Athenians and this influenced in this analysis of democracy, he expressed them in certain themes such as courageous, admiration of noble, conservative political values and most important selfless action on the part of the individual states for the welfare of the Greek community. We say the last theme is the most important because this marked Polybius thought about how this state was being governed, he was not in favor of this state being individual and not contributing to the Greek country and he was also bothered by the facts that in this time, formal distinctions of monarchical and aristocratic politics were still in the govern (not by name but it was clear to him that in the actions, this



forms of politics were still being a part of the governmental system), so he didn't feel like Athenians were being loyal to the democracy concept. "For Polybius ms that democracy would someday be an impulsive, selfless savior of all Greeks in their darkest hours.

### **Sophists influence in democracy**

The term Sophist comes from the Greek word *Sophia* (wisdom) and *Sophos* (wise), so now knowing the meaning of the word we can assume that Sophists were considered wise and had the profession to teach others. These persons were also considered the most famous teachers in Athens Democracy because they maintained a skepticism about reasoning and they were being part of the politics in Athens in an indirect way.

Sophists believed that to participate in politics it was a must to be educated, because being a citizen meant to know how to choose the right things for the state, so it's evident that you need to have at least a basic education to have an idea of what you are doing and how your decisions can affect your state.

There are authors that confirm that:

The intention of the sophists was to educate citizens in political activity, to make them a little wise, imbue them with the encyclopedic and enlightened spirit that they brought so that citizens could also talk about any topic with prolixity and conciseness, and thus face the supposed wise men who occupied power. ( Pradas, s.f., p.32)

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There were many known Sophists in ancient Athens, but the one that is more recognized is Protagoras because of his reflections about politics and other achievements he had, even Plato wrote about his ideologies.

Protagoras was very subjective about politics, he justified the fact that when applying democracy, the decisions were chosen by the citizens through politicians, and these ask for opinions to the wise to make sure they are going in the correct way, even though they won't necessarily follow this advice because of the popular pressure or simply because they don't feel completely comfortable with it.

Many historians and philosophers didn't support Sophists general ideologies but after analyzing them in a political way, I believe that at least in some of their thoughts they had great ideas based in true fundamentals, for example, the one about that education was necessary to participate in politics (democracy), this one should have been a must for the people considered as citizens in Athens because like as they said, how can you make a decision without even knowing what the consequences might be? Sophists leave us with

questions that we should keep asking in our countries nowadays, to realize if we are practicing a pure democracy.

## CHAPTER II

### IMPACT OF DEMOCRACY

#### 2.1 How does democracy work in the actual world?

We know that the idea of democracy is based on autonomous and differentiated wills of citizens and we also know that society is the base for this ideal to be worked on, so how does this governmental system affect the society we live in? Societies are full of disagreements and problems and it is understandable because each person that is part of it has its own ideas and opinions about how things should be done, etc. and this tension between dispersion and organized participation is needed for an actual democracy.

An author said that:

Although in its origins the word democracy had another meaning related to the ruling groups, specifically as an alternative to the government of the aristocrats, at this time Democracy is understood as the political regime in which the people exercise sovereignty through their intervention in government in order to improve their own conditions. ( Jiménez, 2006, p 316)

Modern society is developing really fast with technology, there are many bright sides of this resource but like everything in life, there are a few bad sides too and we should be exploring the good ones instead of being indifferent about it. But what does this have to do with society and democracy? Well first, it is a must to understand the society we live in,



and we are aware that in the actual world technology rules everything, people focus their mind and ideas in what they are told on tv, internet, etc and there is a minimum of persons in the world that actually research to know if this is valuable information, and here is the problem with democracy nowadays, people are just influenced by what they are being told and actually don't care much about this kind of political stuff, they prioritize other things because they believe that the information they were told is enough to make a decision that is going to affect not just yourself but others too, and this is how democracy starts to fail.

### **2.1.1 Democracy in countries around the world**

Almost half of our planet applies democracy in their governmental system, but according to a study released in 2006 by the British magazine The Economist, only 28 of this countries can be recognized for having a “full democracy”, the rest of the countries have imperfect democracies, hybrid regimes or authoritarianism.

This study was based on several indicators, but to resume it, it was divided in five categories that are considered extremely important to be accomplished to have a perfect democracy and this are: electoral process and pluralism, which means representative participation for elections and different elites competing for the political power; civil liberties, this one also is part of the human rights so it has a relevant importance; government operation, that is accomplishing the main function of the government which is carrying out a public policy fulfilling objectives of stabilization and redistribution; political participation that are actions that citizens do without being necessarily involved in the government.



The countries that are on the top for having a “full democracy” based on the categories that we just analyzed are Sweden, Iceland, Holland, Norway and Denmark, this is followed by 23 other countries ( is important to highlight Costa Rica in the 25th place and Uruguay in the 27th), from this position the next level is imperfect democracies, conformed by 54 countries led by South Africa and Chile. Countries that have imperfect democracies are in this position normally because of the leak of citizen participation but, “an imperfect democracy is in any case better than the total absence of democracy.” The Economist, (2007) . The 85 remaining states are considered for having hybrid regimens or authoritarianism.

To conclude this analysis we can certainly realize that comparing to the latest decades, especially the 70’s in which the communism in countries of middle east collapsed because of the end of the Second World War, were the Soviet Union disappeared, which gave a huge change for democracy to standby, the advance of this governmental system has been developing really slow around the world, and maybe it’s time to update the system so more countries can enjoy too a “full democracy”.

#### **2.1.1.1 Top 3 countries with full democracy**

Based on many studies, Sweden is the country that has the best democracy system in the actual world. Even though Sweden is also a monarchy, the king or queen doesn’t

have any political powers, they mainly have ceremonial duties, the ones that actually rule the country are the people elected by the citizens.

Sweden resumes their democracy ideology in one phrase, “ All public power in Sweden emanates from the people” and this means that every decision that is chosen in the state has to be first fundamental in the interests and opinions of the people. But besides this, what makes this governmental system work too well?

Sweden has a very methodic system that controls in any way the chances of corruption to get inside the state, they have many different control measures against the abuse of power, we can focus on one that is probably the most important; their governmental power is divided into three, the parliament, the government and the courts. Each of this has a different role to accomplish, the legislative power is ruled by the parliament, the executive power is ruled by the government and the court applies the laws, but also the parliament has the responsibility and the right to control the government, so if the government is abusing its power the parliament can force them to resign. The laws in this country also have a big impact, and they guarantee that everyone has the right to check how the country is being governed. This and many other factor influence their democratic system, and that’s why this is a country free of corruption, unlike other countries.

Iceland occupies the second place in having a “full democracy”, this country has a population of 334. 252 based on the last population census in 2016. The main reason why

Iceland occupies this place in the top, is probably because this country has seen their govern fall due a crisis and the citizens fought for their rights leading the country to be the first to have a Constitution that has not been written only by the elite of the place, but by the people of Iceland. This country is a true example of the power of popular pressure and the renaissance of a true democracy in which the citizens have the lead.

In third place we have Holland, this country like Sweden has a monarchy and their actual political system is a constitutional monarchy, in their system the king or queen is also the head of the state even though their powers are limited because the parliament has the greater political power. As we can notice, the difference between Sweden and Holland is that in this case, monarchy is involved in the state, but this doesn't really affect their democracy system because is also regulated and they have rules to control any way of corruption, also as we mentioned even though the head of state is important, to make a decision they first have to ask for advice to a certain group of politicians so then they can investigate the best way to make the things work out the best for the state.

These three countries are in the head of best democracy systems in the actual world, and they are also the best example for other countries to start changing their governmental systems to get out of corruption and abuse of power and start regenerating as a better country.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **A DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY**

#### **3.1. Citizens acknowledgment of democracy**

Ignorance is the world's biggest generator of problems in our society, and nowadays this difficulty has been growing more and more, even though technology makes the learning process much easier than before, people don't see the internet as that kind of instrument, but for doing social media stuff, that in our actual society, seems more important than real lifetime problems. But what does this have to do with democracy?

Well, as we have discussed before, there's a high need of knowing what you are doing to apply this system correctly when it is required, and people these days, especially the youth don't seem to be interested in how this process could affect their lives someday, and this is something we should all worry about because in the future to make the right choices for their society they need to know the basics of this democratic system.

The most common example in which we see the democratic system being applied is in the elections, and this is probably the most important one for the citizens. As we know, the Greeks invented democracy considering that every person that was dedicated to politics



should be also willing to dedicate their lives to the people and to refuse to some of their personal interests for the collective good, nowadays the ideology, of course, has evolved and now it's not just about applying the process to keep politicians controlled but to create a more just and equitable society for everyone that forms a part of it.

Citizens every day seem to care less about the impact of this system, and instead of using facilities such as internet to find out what's going on, to fulfill elections correctly and not just voting for the guy that seems nice, we are being ignorant as a society, and we think we have actually evolved but everyday people focus more on their personal difficulties than the rest of their community they are part of, and this is one of the major problems nowadays. People aren't aware of the impact of democracy.

### **3.1.1 Difficulties that can be present in democracy systems**

The biggest problem that can ruin a democratic process is corruption, this term means when there's a circumstance or situation where public functionaries or public authorities are being corrupted for some reason. This is a problem that has been coming for many years and it was even considered a necessary evil for development but people started to realize this was a huge mistake, and from now on this problem hasn't stopped growing, especially in third world countries.

There are many strategies that exist to fight corruption and to try to avoid falling in this hole, for example supervision and improvements of purchasing systems, the



strengthening of the functions of control bodies, realizing campaigns of civic education and approving laws to get access to information and the creation of organisms against corruption, such as many other ways that exist, but still many countries don't apply this and later they will realize the trouble corruption can form.

## CHAPTER IV

### INTERVIEW APPLIED

#### 4.1 Analysis of the applied interview

1. To what extent do you think, that it is necessary to know the roots of democracy to understand and know how to apply it?

To the extent that if we do not go to our roots we run the risk of losing the horizon of democracy or we simply would not have other perspectives to look at our reality and solve current problems.

2. Do you think that in today's society people know the impact of this system of government?

I think that people know and understand the impact of this system of government, the problem is ethical.

3. Why is knowing about the impact of democracy fundamental in our society?

Knowing the impact of democracy is fundamental, but we should apply it to live better in harmony with others locally and globally.

4. What does a full democracy mean and entail?

A full democracy entails responsibility, teamwork and power is circular and not linear; that is to say, the essential thing is the internalization of the human being on his duties, rights and obligations.

5. What aspects do you consider most important for a democratic process to be carried out correctly?

The most important aspect is to change and apply the organizational models: to implant the redarchy by the traditional hierarchy, in this way we can be closer to politics to understand and live in harmony.

6. Based on several investigations, we know that the indexes of the best democratic systems occur in Nordic countries. Why do you consider this to be so?

Because their culture is based on equality, trust and respect for the other. There is no gap between society and politics.

Another important aspect of these countries is their history, because they were not colonial power.

7. To what extent do you think that democracy needs to be renewed because we are constantly changing? What aspects should be considered?

The aspects that should be considered are:

The quality of human beings that today's society needs.

We can not think of a local society but a global one.

We need to work as a team without hierarchies.

8.How do you consider the democratic system that is carried in our country? What improvements would you recommend?

The democratic system in our country, is infected by corruption, do not think of others to be happy.

I would recommend: return to the roots of our society, know, understand and reflect on what we are doing now, to change the system for a more human world.

## CONCLUSIONS

At the end of this monographic work, it is concluded that:

In the first chapter there are presented different points of view about the ancient democracy, specifically the 5th century, it is based on the ideas of Polybius and Sophists that were present in Greece at that moment in history, and we analyze that even though there were diverse ideas about this political system, all of them lead to the one we see presented nowadays and with the same center of importance, that is equality.

The second chapter is based on the impact of democracy in which there are discussed three topics, how does democracy work in the actual world which we can conclude that there are different ideas of democracy and depending on the society and country it is presented in different ways, in the second topic the conclusion is that not many countries enjoy a true democracy and to end the chapter there are 3 top countries with the best democracy governmental system mentioned.

The third chapter is focused on the democratic society and in general the conclusion is that to have a real democratic government in a country, it is required that the citizens have acknowledgment about this system to apply it in the correct forms, and that there can



be many difficulties present in a democracy but there are many forms to avoid this from happening.

The last chapter is the analysis of an interview applied to a history and citizenship teacher to get a better idea of how democracy impacts the society and what things can be changed to have a better system in our country and others around the world, and the conclusion was that it is a must to go back to the roots of our societies, knowing, understanding and reflect about what we are doing in the actual world.

Democracy has been living through the years and evolving with every era to adapt to new ideologies, but in resume of this system, it is not just about thinking of it in a local society but a global one, and to have a better governmental system is required to start thinking about changing our ways to think and to transform our world to a more human one, with more ethical people who think and consider the importance of making their ideas and opinions valid in a correct form.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

At the end of this work, it is recommended that:

- for students to be more interested in learning about governmental process like democracy, to apply it correctly when needed and not just in a political ambit but in other aspects of life
- that teachers find more creative and interesting ways to explain students about important topics like this and to teach them to be ethical and reflect about the decisions this takes and the analysis that has to be done before being sure of the decision.
- for the citizens to think more about the decisions they are taking and not being influenced by others, but to decide for what represents their ideas and be ethical while choosing.

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