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Democracy appeared in order to deliver the individual from a dehumanising subjection; but it may become a dehumanising tyranny itself. A sovereign people may become as harsh and merciless as a sovereign lord.

The democratic idea is the corollary of the doctrine of the equal intrinsic worth of every individual soul. The modern democratic movement has started from a recognition of this principle; and the principle is meaningless unless it implies the prescriptive right of the individual to self-determination. Lord Acton's definition of liberty is inadequate because he approaches it from the standpoint of one who was in a permanent religious minority in his own country, and in a permanent intellectual minority in his church. Liberty is surely the assurance that a man may have full opportunity to live out his own life and to grow to the full stature of his manhood, to be true to himself through everything. This requires the recognition of real personal independence and a definite minimum of obligatory uniformity. In another connection, Acton insists that "liberty is not a means to a higher political end; it is itself the highest political end. It is not for the sake of a good public administration that it is required, but for security in the pursuit of the highest objects of civil society and of private life." It is so frequently assumed that the function of government is the establishment and preservation of order that it is well to remember that it is a