The thoughts which follow do not concern the soundness or otherwise of the proposal for the holding of a referendum, but the conclusion drawn from the way the political world expressed their reaction, which demonstrates the conception which it has of popular sovereignty. It is not our intention to concern ourselves with government and party policies, because it is our belief that what really is capable of regulating things, over time, is the consciousness of human beings and a change in the models of life and not issues of this type receiving publicity - whatever the evolution of these current topics may be.

A clear answer, then, to a referendum depends upon the clarity of the question and the thorough briefing of the people. For this reason, a referendum can be a counterfeiting of the true popular will, on the one hand, by means of an unclear and misleading question, and, on the other, by an absence of proper briefing of the electorate. As well as that, the motive for the holding of a referendum may be on many occasions unsound, that is, its aim may be the benefit of individuals or parties and not the common good, or even the public interest. Naturally, the same is true of parliamentary elections, such as, for example, the most recent, when the government was elected on the basis of promises which, however, are not being kept.

Those who reject the loan agreements with the Europeans are afraid that the dilemma, which in the nature of things is blackmailing, will press the people to accept the agreement out of fear, resulting in their being irrevocably committed in the future. Those, again, who want the loan agreement to be concluded fear that the anger and reaction of the people will lead them to reject it, again resulting in their being irrevocably committed in the future. The fact is, however, that both are equally true; that is, people are subject simultaneously to opposing psychological pressures which both can be seen as well-founded, given that they do not know all the facts, all the truth so as to conjecture correctly about the future - beyond the fact that the future itself involves a large degree of uncertainty. This psychological conflict cannot be avoided.

In any event, the people must attain a new level of participation in political developments which directly concern them, which is a function not only of a formal voting procedure, but, above all, of correct and detailed briefing, as well as of a search for new tools for their participation in the shaping of political decisions.

However, the way in which politicians and the media have reacted has revealed other
parameters of apprehension which are irrelevant to the soundness or not of the specific issue, whether, that is, it is right or not to hold a referendum.

A. The general reactions
Apart from rare exceptions involving a negative response based on truly reasonable arguments, there have been reactions which denigrate referendums in general, and, above all, popular sovereignty. By way of indication, we would cite the following views:

• Because the response will be in all probability negative, a referendum should not be held!
The advocates of this view are saying, that is, that the will of the people does not count and that policy should be implemented in the teeth of that will.

But the source of all powers is the people - according to Article 1, para. 3 of the Constitution, which states that "All powers derive from the people and exist for the People and the Nation; they shall be exercised as specified by the Constitution." When will the people be able to answer directly on serious matters which concern them? We would say that the parliamentary process is a greater indirectification of popular sovereignty than a referendum; this reaches the point where government administration comes into total conflict with its manifestos as well as with the popular mandate, as was the case with the previous government.

Thus this response is the crudest abuse of power, at least at the level of thinking and motives. This does not mean that we believe that just any people is in all cases wise and its responses correct. For example, we could cite the Roman Senate, which was much more sensible and rational than the great mass of the plebeians in certain critical circumstances, but also the reverse - that in an earlier period there was secret law (!), which changed only after an uprising of the plebs. But this is not our subject. Furthermore, the same, perhaps selfish, considerations which prompt the proposal of a referendum are likely to prompt a refusal of it. Economic and psychological interests are complex and difficult to discern.

The problem lies in the field of concept and principles, where the Constitution, Democracy, and social cohesion do not seem to have any effect influence on the thinking of those in power, but only personal likings and interests.
• The people cannot judge rightly because of a lack of knowledge
How can we speak of knowledge when the politicians themselves do not inform the people and there is always a covert policy, sometimes on the pretext that they should not cause? For example, even the politicians do not know about the loan agreement. Consequently, an elite with power connections always decides.

However, the same problem of lack of knowledge also exists in parliamentary elections. We cannot maintain that personal acquaintance with the local Members of Parliament, which is based chiefly on the awarding of personal favours, can be a substitute for profound ignorance on serious issues of the voters, but also on the part of the deputies themselves and of all the party officials - since this ignorance is obvious to society as a whole, in spite of individual exceptions. But the role of the political intermediary seems to be more profitable.

In addition, this lack of knowledge on the part of the people ought to prompt those in politics to alter - as they should - their relationship with the people and create opportunities for real, non-party information, not controlled by the elite. Their duty is to help human improvement and not party interests.

• Since in exceptional cases in the past a referendum has not been held, why should it be held now? So its use now would be a kind of deviation.
The past, however, cannot be a serious factor in our judgement, because at some point a beginning must be made for more democracy, otherwise, if we are constantly looking back at the past, we shall not take even one step forwards.

On the other hand, this past of referendums which were not held cannot assist us in historical interpretation, since the Constitution lays down clearly and without difficulties of construction in Article 44, para. 2 that:

"The President of the Republic shall by decree proclaim a referendum on crucial national matters following a resolution voted by an absolute majority of the total number of Members of Parliament, taken upon proposal of the Cabinet.

A referendum on Bills passed by Parliament regulating important social matters, with the exception of fiscal ones, shall be proclaimed by decree by the President of the Republic, if this
is decided by three-fifths of the total number of its members ... ."

In the past, moreover, there was not a popular reaction like the present one on matters which could potentially be put to a referendum.

**A referendum is not permitted on public finance matters**

But the loan agreement, in itself, is not a public finance issue, even though it will have a direct influence on this sector - everything has an effect on a country's fiscal affairs. On the other hand, it is not possible when a people is not allowed to vote on public finance issues, for foreigners, that is, foreign governments or private agencies, to regulate them directly or indirectly. Politics must, without fail, also concern itself in depth with political models which it cultivates in practice, regardless of grand words, which do not create models, because they are either generalising bombast, or, though sound, they are not put into practice. Theory and practice must be linked, otherwise democracy dies. Politics, however, is practised at a level of immediacy of interests and ease of political management, without inspiration for the future and without responsibility. This is the central problem - and it does not concern Greece alone.

**The foreigners and powerful international agencies are sneering at Greece and reacting against the referendum**

This is even more morally groundless, because, apart from their power, they do not seem to possess anything else worthwhile, such as standards, reason, and co-operativeness; because if they possessed these, they would not have proposed or imposed economic models of a kind which cannot be controlled by the whole of society and the state, such as the unchecked profiteering which also occurs in their own countries. And the fact that a small country has put them in a difficult position should not be an absolute determinant for the people, since the peoples also are forced to concern themselves with and suffer from their own foolishness.

On the other hand, this line of thought cannot, naturally, serve as an excuse for our country, as it is ailing at so many points that it needs truly dramatic change. But the criteria for change cannot be set by those agencies of power which have, in any event, their own obvious problems, in spite of the fact that they try to keep quiet about them.

**Parliamentary elections are the only solution**

But the supporters of this view do not explain why; they merely invoke something which is 'self-evident', but which is never explained. There is general talk and a deliberate obscurity which are addressed to the affective, but not to people's need for understanding -
understanding not only of what must become a thing of the past (which, in any event, they are well aware of, because they experience it), but also of what is going to be or must be done. This, therefore, is reactionary thinking, which is dependent upon denial and in no way on affirmation, and this is the principal problem of democracy, together, of course, with that responsibility which is the heart of true living in a society.

• **The response to the referendum will be binding on any government and on the people**
But it is precisely for this reason that referendums are held: in order to be binding. Is this view democratic thinking? Power, however, always wishes not to be bound by peoples, whereas true governance is bound only by the common good. This is always the tendency of those in power - we also saw it in the case of Iceland, where there was overbearing pressure for a change in the response of the people to the referendum on the issue of the recognition of their banks' debt. Peoples, according to this view, should not intrude upon political management, but be simply a pool for which money is drawn, which, to boot, will not even be channelled to the social welfare for the benefit of these peoples.

On the other hand, we must admit, of course, that democracy has become finally what the peoples themselves wanted it to become: a source of individual irresponsibility and senseless 'freedom', but they have forgotten that the only irresponsibility which remains unpunished is the irresponsibility of power.

B. Democracy's need for information
There is in the end an all-embracing problem of information and truth in the relation of the people with politicians.

There is similarly a related overall problem of participation of the people in serious decisions.

But, even if a view is sound, it must be promoted in a democratic way, in the interests of knowledge and understanding on the part of society and with respect for it. Democracy must be an open system of political management with freedom of information.

The people, however, in practice, cannot know with clarity, or cannot know at all, the things that concern them, because most of the information is kept from them - both that which is concerned
with interconnections of power, nationally and internationally, and that concerned with political party interests, as well as with economic reality. Reference to economic terms which are unintelligible to the majority of people requires specialist knowledge, whereas these could to some degree be simplified for the average citizen, in such a way that he is able to understand the consequences of figures, without having to rely on vague assurances on the part of politicians who assume absolute trust in them (which, however, is not there).

Furthermore, a comparison with the economic state of other peoples who are considered to be more fortunate than the Greeks would be useful. In addition, we hear all the time about the public deficit, but nothing about private deficits - of the banks, businesses, households, and so on, or how much these affect the economy of a country - given that the economy is many-sided. However, specialisation has always formed a feature of elitism and power, a part of the fascination as domination. And in the matter of parliamentary elections or a referendum, it would be democratic, and should be obligatory, for the politicians taking whatever view (for or against) to explain the consequences of each option, as well as for all the actors involved, also with rational arguments - the counter-arguments being permitted - and not with pronouncements of the type of 'self-evident', 'good' or 'bad', or with an indefinite invocation of democracy and of the people, like a revival afresh of a religious priesthood.

But real briefing would reveal a painful qualitative equalisation between the rulers and the ruled, because, at this level of politics without ideas, the ruled have a greater capacity for understanding than the elites think, and this is something which would damage the fascination of their power.

To conclude: since the situation is truly difficult, and since, whatever the political options are, the problems will be unsolved and hard to bear, the only thing left for society is change at the level of life principles and a gradual adaptation to these. The best life principles call for less individualism and more sociability, less consumption as a substitute for life, greater responsibility towards the true self, society, and the environment, greater calm and security, which, however, will not based so much on 'having' but more on social cohesion.

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