

**THE FREE LANCE BOOKS.  
V. DEMOCRACY AND  
THE WILL TO POWER**

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The Free Lance Books. V. Democracy and the Will to Power by James N. Wood

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**JAMES N. WOOD**

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DEMOCRACY AND  
THE WILL TO POWER

By JAMES N. WOOD



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## INTRODUCTION

What we have here is the first serious attempt, at least by an American, to get at the fundamentals of the democratic process of government. Upon the superficial phenomena of democracy, of course, there has been endless writing, some of it more or less honest and scientific; but all that sort of thing is a study of symptoms, not of the disease itself. Mr. Wood sees clearly, like Dr. Hans Delbrück, that democracy, in actual practise, has little if anything to do with the determination and execution of the popular will, or even of the will of the majority. There Dr. Delbrück, in his "Regierung und Volkswille," stops; he proves that the common notion is false, but in his approach to the truth he halts in a suburb of questions and surmises. Mr. Wood is bolder, perhaps because he has lived nearer to democracy all his life. The essential process, he argues, is a conflict between superior minority groups—superior, at all events, politically, in strategical sense, in clar-

## INTRODUCTION

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ity of purpose and will-pressure—with each striving its utmost to arouse and victimize the great masses of the stupid and ignorant, and to convert them into infantry for its army. Under democracy, the largest battalions always win. Even when, as Dr. Delbrück shows from American history, the victory goes to an absolute minority, it is always relatively a majority. But the issues that mark the primary conflict of wills and the issues that are used to beat up recruits are by no means necessarily identical; in fact, they are seldom if ever identical. Thus there is an esoteric politics and an exoteric politics—a combat for ideas, advantages, position, power, and a combat for mere votes, the symbols of power.

It is this disparity that makes the political struggle under democracy so dishonest and so ridiculous. Practical politics consists, not in finding out what the majority wants and executing it as faithfully as possible, but in mobilizing an endless series of new majorities by inventing an endless series of new shibboleths and enthusiasms, most of them bearing no sort of contact with the underlying contest of wills, and many of them quite devoid of any intelligibility