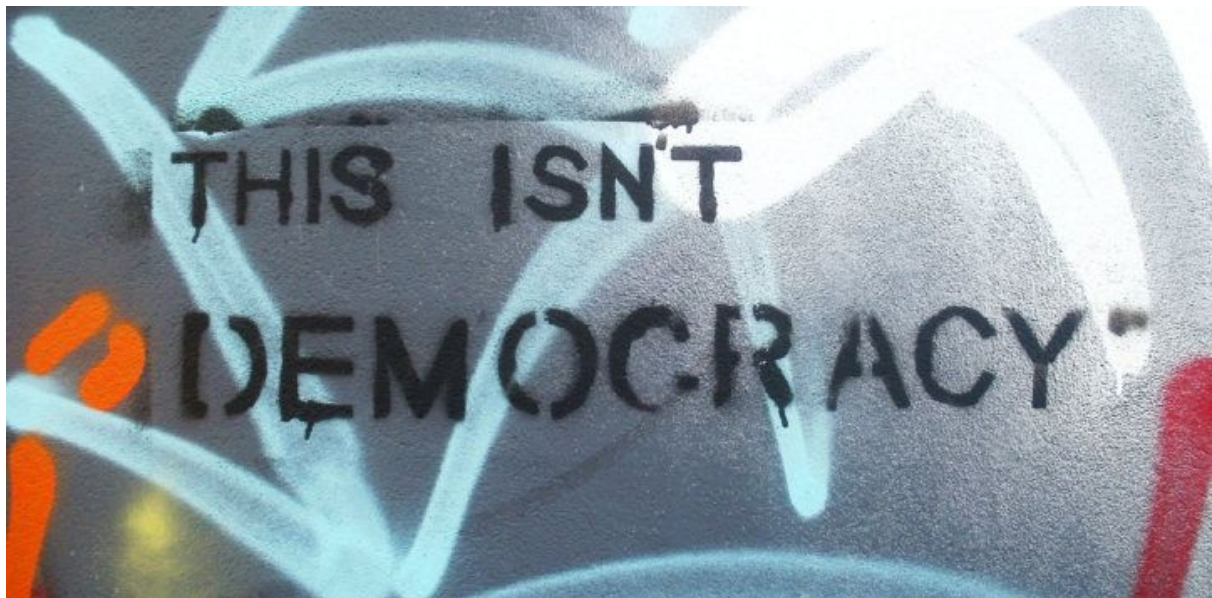


The Question of Democracy

Dieter Duhm, 1981



Democracy – are there any well-founded ideas about the meaning of this word and the possibility of its realization? Do those who speak of “democracy” really want democracy or do they actually want something quite different? Many of the people who became the followers of a guru came from the political left and the alternative movement, where it was natural to speak of democracy. The two movements that have caused an uproar in Germany during the last few years – AAO (an Austrian therapy and culture center with free sexuality) and Poona (an ashram in India founded by the controversial spiritual teacher, Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh, or Osho as he was later known) – have at their center an eminently charismatic leader. If one views the whole movement toward alternative living of the last 200 years, including the large American communes, one can draw a thought-provoking conclusion: so far, the only communities that have persisted for a long period of time have been of the charismatic, and not the democratic, type.

The political ideal fails, as always, in the face of emotional reality. The relationship between parent and child has nowhere been overcome. The grown-ups have not grown up. People have become sensitized to the social and political conditions of oppression – they defend themselves against domination and authoritarian structures and therefore believe that they want democracy. But in truth (in the reality of their soul processes) most people defend themselves against authority for the same reasons that make them glorify their leader when they have found the right one: they are emotionally fixated on authority, in fear and hatred as well as in love. One should consider how much childish longing for love, how much

inclination for adoration and worship could never be expressed in childhood because the adults were of no use – and what an enormous amount of latent longing is still there, waiting to be called upon! And then we meet a character who suddenly gives a green light to all these longings, one who symbolizes the great positive mother or father figure onto whom the hidden inner child can project all positive attributes. Through this process, true experiences of revival and awakening take place. The strongest force in the human being, love, is awakened. The libidinous upheaval is so powerful that it truly changes one's life. One has to have experienced it oneself – for example in the way that five thousand sannyasins celebrated Bhagwan's birthday in the Buddha Hall in Poona. Yes, it was like an enormous kindergarten, but it was a feast of flowing love, devotion and thankfulness, in a way that the ordinary Westerner cannot imagine. When faced with volcanic eruptions of such genuine and intimate emotional force and identity (!) all intellectual nagging must cease. This is life. This is, at least for the moment, the truth of the common emotional structures that shape the true longings of most humans!

The catchwords for a better world – democracy, equality, nonviolence and social justice – almost always stem from crisis and resentment, not from a thought-through positive conviction. That is the deeper reason for their failure. They do not touch the real emotional structures, problems and longings of the people concerned. Wilhelm Reich drew attention to this dilemma fifty years ago in his book, "What is Class Consciousness?" Much of what he wrote is just as true today.

As with nonviolence, democracy is a question neither of verbal commitment nor of the outer political form of a system. Rather it is a question mainly of the emotional state and structure of drives in the human. Unfulfilled libidinous needs still stand fundamentally in the way of a free and democratic society. The emotional structure of today's human is not democratic and autonomous, but rather feudalistic. Just as in olden times, we long for Father, God and Caesar – but we do not want them in the old form, we want a psychological equivalent for them. As long as no deliverer is in sight, we do not recognize our inclinations and instead speak of something else, such as democracy or even anarchy. But as soon as such a god-like father-figure becomes visible, we start to come alive and forget everything we preached about the day before. I have often seen critical intellectuals, Marxists, thinkers and individualists arrive at the extremely hierarchically organized Friedrichshof in Austria and in very little time cease their resistance – not because they were broken down through brainwashing, as a sensationalist newspaper depicted it – but because they could no longer believe in their own resistance. Their true desires had been awakened.

Some readers may now understand me when I state quite simply that our culture of today, including our counterculture, is a pseudo culture. At the verbal level hardly anyone is credible any more, for people want something different from what they say. People are thirsty, but hardly anyone dares to say what for. The communities of

AAO and Poona have brought this thirst out into the open, and what they teach us should be taken seriously. The political slogans of democracy, peace and justice sound like Salvation Army hymns when compared to real life, as long as their psychological roots are not reflected upon deeply, down to the dynamics of their underlying drives and their emotional core, and realized from there.

True humanism needs democracy. All guru structures, all adoration of leaders and all forms of organization of human communities that are based on emotional fixation may be an important temporary learning phase for those involved, but they do not answer the question that we are faced with. That question is: what organizational form and inner constitution can we create for living together that can be applied generally and, in the long term, make humane structures possible?

Truly responsible humaneness can come into existence only after the fixations are overcome and the time has arrived when democracy is psychologically possible. The development of real democracy will be based on the reality at hand, for example, on the fact that in every community there is a kind of natural hierarchy (which can always change itself). Before the community can give itself a conscious form of organization, some sort of group structure will already have evolved through the hierarchy of perceived human differences. These differences are a part of the variety of human biotope. They must not be suppressed through an overlay of egalitarian claims but rather should be used for creative learning processes.

Grassroots and group democracy that reflects life is not based on egalitarian structures but on the optimum possibilities for individual development and growth in the intellectual autonomy of all members. These are high terms. They require the realization of three things in the democratic society of the future:

Firstly, the child-parent fixation – which so far has held people in lifelong childish dependency on authorities – must be overcome through new social forms of raising children and new social forms of love.

Secondly, all emotional repression – which so far has stopped the emotional development of the human at an early stage and thus prevented him from growing up – must cease through a social system of free love, free research and free work.

Thirdly, the greatest possible social transparency needs to be created, allowing the individual, from childhood on, to have an overview of his social environment, to know his present position in the community and to take part in current decisions. The next section considers some principles for achieving this social transparency.

Democracy cannot be achieved by fiat. It can only emerge and grow when the necessary emotional, mental and social conditions are there. As it grows gradually

and slowly, the community in which it develops will take the form of a circle – a circle where each element carries a different weight and a different meaning but has its place and its relation to the whole.

This is an edited excerpt from the book: [Towards a New Culture](#) by [Dieter Duhm](#).