

Uneasiness in Democracy

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Let me begin with an observation. In this country literally everybody who makes politics or takes part in it claims to be a democrat. Ironically, in a country where there is no institutionalized political pluralism we face a pluralism of democratic positions. I will mention just two extremes which are improperly, yet for explicable political reasons, described in national terms. On the one hand, we have to deal with endeavours originating in civil society to institute an open society, a pluralist political system and a constitutional state, whereas on the other, there exists a broad popular movement under the tutelage of an authoritarian communist party which constitutes a monolithic and expansionist nation-party-state acting by destroying the existing legality.

Politically, I identify myself with the first model (although this identification is by no means without reservations). Consequently, I am refuting the other extreme. However, I am not willing to subscribe to the common reaction, to it denying its democratic character. In my opinion, its proponents should be taken at their word: it *is* a democratic movement. It would be much easier, of course, to pretend »we« are the democrats while »they« are only misusing the term. In this case, we would posit an external adversary or, even better, we would face an enemy from outside. We would be endangered by the anti-democrats, yet as *the* democrats we would feel easy. That is, our democratic politics would be in danger while our democratic identity would remain unquestioned. We would perceive ourselves as pure democrats. At the moment we admit the democratic of our totalitarian adversaries, this changes. We begin to feel uneasy as democrats. The antagonism in political reality which has established us as pure democrats is being internalised this way. It becomes a pure antagonism in democracy and the pure democracy gets lost. Our democratic identity which formerly has been presupposed exposes itself as an unclear one, it is set free, it becomes, so to say, free-floating. And this is, in my opinion, where democratic politics today starts. Its first principle, if I may say so, is that there is no pure democracy and its condition is the uneasiness in democracy.

Proceeding to conceptual questions, it would be quite simple to detect in the first above-mentioned position the concept of formal democracy and in the second the notion of substantive democracy; the former could be described as predominantly protective, implying the juristic, negative notion of liberty, and the latter as basically developmental, derived from the notion of positive liberty, the freedom for; the one

which could be conceived as liberal, while the other as totalitarian democracy. Yet the problem I would like to touch lies elsewhere.

According to the current Yugoslav debate, there are two basic notions of democracy. One is said to be the concept of national democracy while the other is derived from the concept of abstract citizen. In the view of the advocates of this latter concept, claiming the citizen is an abstract person stripped of any sexual, national, social, professional or other characteristic, both above-designed models are models of national democracy. Their basic feature is said to be that they have the notion of national community at their basis. I do not want to argue about how accurate this equation is - in my opinion it is not accurate at all. I would like to highlight at the inaccuracy of the notion of the abstract citizen. However, my first remark is a political one. By denying the difference between the models I have described as liberal and totalitarian democracy, the advocates of the abstract citizen's democracy who are suppressing the congeniality between their position and totalitarian democracy.

Totalitarian democracy namely presupposes the abstract, unsocial individual. Such an abstract person becomes a citizen by directly extraditing himself (I am saying »himself«, as to say »herself« would already mean to introduce the gender which is a social category) to the general will. Or, to put it another way, the abstract citizen is the concrete emanation of the general will. All the social and political mediations are excluded. A classical case is the Jacobin experience. In our case such unsocial citizens are being aggregated as the Party & State mob. In the official newspeak this is being called »the people are enacted«. The abstract citizen is related exclusively to the state. He cannot found a party or join one. The concept of non-party political pluralism is the logical consequence. As are the demands of the totalitarian democrats to crack down on the poor beginnings of political pluralism which are said to represent a nationalist deviation.

The abstract citizen being the starting point, it is impossible to think politically. To avoid a misunderstanding: any politics deriving from the abstract citizen is possible only in so far as it is based upon his suppressed sociality. Originating in suppression, it ends in oppression and repression. In order to make thinking politically possible, it is, in my view, necessary to articulate the social. Not least, to articulate the social inherent in the abstract citizen. By this I do not mean to wither away the abstractness of the citizen but to conceptualize it in a different way. There is no abstract citizen in the sense of an unsocial being, that is, there is no presocial (or suprasocial) citizen. The citizen is an abstract person not because he is stripped of any social characteristic but because no social characteristic can be discriminated in the name of the abstract citizenship. This means that no social identity can hinder the access to citizenship. That is, regardless of any social characteristic a person should have the right to act as a citizen, although this person never acts, never can act, as a citizen in the abstraction of his social characteristics. Being social, that is, being necessarily partial, is the condition of being abstract. A person cannot enter the citizenship by denying his socialness but by asserting it. The abstractness of citizen can be but partial, and citizenship is by definition porous and unwhole, untotal.

The abstract citizen has often been conceived as the bearer of rights. in order to make

my concluding point I will refer to an historical debate, to the English Revolution Controversy. Burke with Wollstonecraft is, in my view, a formula which elucidates at least some of the crucial and, so far, unsolved problems of the conceptual construction of democracy. Burke's criticism of the »metaphysic rights« could be summed up in the statement that a »civil social man« cannot enjoy the rights of an uncivil state, that is, that in a social state there are no natural rights. Wollstonecraft's first *Vindication*, being an answer to Burke, is a classical case in defending the abstract citizen endowed with natural rights. Yet she discovers this standpoint unsatisfactorily very soon. Her second *Vindication* brings the social into the abstract rights of men. With her defence of the rights of woman the rights of man definitively become a social construction. However, the instructiveness of her intervention lies in the succession of her writings, it would escape us, would we not take into consideration her trilogy consisting of *A Vindication of the Rights of Men*, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* and *The Wrongs of Woman*. It is true, Wollstonecraft's work did not result in a new model of democracy. Yet, the rights of wo/man being a crucial feature of democracy, it is true, as well, that her work initiates a new way of thinking about democracy, and a new democratic sensibility. Its two great messages are, in my opinion, first, that rights can be conceived only by taking the ineradicable social characteristics of the subjects endowed with them into account, and, secondly, that even if the rights are obtained, the wrongs persist.

In this point I disagree with those liberal democrats (not to speak of the totalitarian) who understand democracy as the solution of the wrongs. In my view, the aim of democracy is not to redeem us from wrongs but to make us able to deal with them freely. A reconciliation with wrongs is one of the sources of the uneasiness in democracy.