



Institute of World Culture

IWC October 2007 Newsletter

Musings About Democracy

IWC's seminar room was completely full recently for a Saturday afternoon seminar on "Developing Deep Democracy". The seminar raised questions about what democracy really is and what its purposes might be. Conventional definitions of democracy such as rule by the people or rule by the governed (two different connotations?) were contrasted with the aims of "deep democracy".

Questions about democracy include:

- Have we ever really had a true democracy where power is distributed sufficiently equally among all persons and decisions were made "by the people, for the people, and of the people"?
- What are democratic ideals? In many cases, democratic ideals have not prevented massive injustices in its name.
- Are democratic ideals, such as the Jeffersonian vision developed in the United States, worth pursuing as an avenue of social and citizen regeneration in a time of cultural disintegration, institutional hegemony, mass society and seemingly passive citizenry?
- Do a sufficient number of individuals have the wisdom necessary to make a democratic process viable?
- What is the role of the family and education in sustaining and creating forms of flourishing democracies?
- What about all the other conditions which support democratic functioning?
- Can there be such a thing as a "deep democracy"?

Both representative democracy (voting for representatives with accountability and transparency) and direct democracy (citizens directly deciding issues affecting them in town meetings or with referenda) might be perceived as limited "mechanisms" for aggregating votes and interests.

Deep democracy might enliven and make more relevant these processes by building local self-rule through strengthening community. Deep democracy strives to build an active, participative realization of a more self-governed, self-organizing, local community based on the principles of reciprocity and conviviality

in social life. These would include a re-localization of the economy, alternative livelihood potentials, voluntary resource sharing, recognition of ecological limits, employment of deliberative and direct democratic methods, and the encouragement of lifelong learning in the arts, crafts, and sciences. A model of deep democracy assumes the rights of citizens to self-rule and self-organization by encouraging creative integration of public policy differences with decisions involving a series of expanding concentric circles from "the bottom up." In this way, citizens gain experience with engaging greater and greater diversity over time. Various forms of public initiatives that are both situationally responsive and enabled by a series of flexible, inclusive consensus-building processes and norms would be used for both educative opportunities on self-rule and community awareness as well as points of resistance to outside intrusions of concentrated political or economic power. Certainly, the process of building democracy must begin with and be sustained by principles of and the practice of tolerance and civility.

Maurice Bisheff

Gandhi's Message of Peace

The 138th anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi's birth on October 2nd offers a reminder of the core principles of his teachings. Gandhi is one of the greatest exemplars of non-violence the world has ever known. Mohandas Gandhi's message of peace permeated everything he did in his life, from the spiritual to the political realm, from family and communal life to the national and global realms. Indeed, it is still reverberating today and will continue to influence and inspire future generations. *(Continued below.)*

Coming Events in October



Forum: Music, Mythology & Transformation
Saturday, October 13, 4:00 – 6:00 PM
Concord House, 1407 Chapala St., Santa Barbara
Presenter: Jeanne Martin

An accomplished harpist explains the healing and transformative power of music by exploring stories from ancient mythology that teach about the possibilities of inner balance and the harmony of the spheres. A demonstration will be offered showing how these stories can be used in practice to bring harmony into the healing and dying experiences of patients.

Film: The Power of Myth

Saturday, October 20, 7:30-9:30 PM

Concord House, 1407 Chapala St., Santa Barbara

Selections from the conversations of PBS journalist, Bill Moyers with insightful scholar, Joseph Campbell will be shown.



Seminar: Transforming Environmental Policy: Private Conscience and Public Choice

Wednesday, October 24, 7:30 – 9:30 PM

Presenter: Carl Pope

The Executive Director of the Sierra Club will lead a roundtable discussion on the link between individual decision-making and ecologically responsible social action. Sponsored by the Santa

Barbara Ecological Education Coalition. Reservations required. Contact Philip Grant, phil@reverentialecology.org or call (805) 201-2810.

Study Groups

Stories and Poems of Transformation

Thursday, October 11

8:00 - 9:30 PM

The inspirational poetry of Sufi saint, Jalal-ul-Din Rumi will be read and discussed this month. Contact Joseph Miller at 967-7263 or daylight137@msn.com for more information.

Inspiration in Contemporary Music

Thursday, October 25

8:00 - 9:30 PM

Enjoy the selected recorded music of James Taylor on the theme of "The Pathos of the Common Man." Contact Gerry Kiffe at 376-2852 or gerry@gardensoft.com for more information.

REMINDER: Please turn in your suggestions for the 2008 program now. Thank you!

Gandhi's Message of Peace *(cont'd. from above)*

The doctrine of **ahimsa**, or non-violence, was one of Gandhi's core principles, and ultimately involved active, ceaseless love for all life. He said that by working with this law, human beings expressed the harmony and order of the Cosmos.

The law of love is based upon what the Hindus call Sat, Absolute Reality

and Eternal Truth, the source and foundation of the unity of all. **Satya** means "truth", "real", "existent", "valid" and "pure", and refers to one's best conception of truth while embodied - which is necessarily relative to the Highest Truth. Truth is the goal of existence. Gandhi believed in the absolute oneness of God and humanity; therefore, he identified with all fellow beings.

"There is nothing on earth that I would not give up for the sake of the country excepting of course two things and two only, namely, truth and nonviolence. I would not sacrifice these two for all the world. For to me Truth is God and there is no way to find Truth except the way of nonviolence. I do not seek to serve India at the sacrifice of Truth or God. For I know that a man who forsakes Truth can forsake his country, and his nearest and dearest ones." (*Mahatma, II, Speech, 12/20/1926, in All Men are Brothers, p. 73*)

His metaphysical and religious principles were expressed in practice through ethical action. The enactment of satya and ahimsa, however, required a commitment to hold onto the truth in the most difficult of times. Gandhi called those who practiced non-violence "satyagrahis"; **satyagraha** literally means "holding onto truth". Gandhi referred to this holding power as "Soul Force" because it drew out deep moral energies from within. Satyagraha was the opposite of using physical force to harm one's opponent. The life of a Satyagrahi involved a relentless search for truth, and a determination to reach truth through the realization of ahimsa, nonviolence, and ultimately, compassion for all life.

In order to be able to respond non-violently in every challenging situation, Gandhi's followers practiced **swaraj**, or "self-rule". He taught that because human beings are one with the Absolute in essence, they have the necessary inner resources and faculties to practice ahimsa. Doing so required self-restraint and a conscious will to do that which benefits all other beings, not just that desired by self-interest groups. Ahimsa required disciplined rule from within, a mental struggle, a following of one's conscience, and ultimately fearlessness in the face of death.

Gandhi's message of nonviolence is highly relevant today. If we wish to be nonviolent and work for peace within ourselves and in the world, there are numerous avenues of self-examination and exploration that would bear fruit, if we are courageous and patient enough to follow through.

Gandhi stands as an exemplar of truth and non-violence who continues to deeply inspire those who seek peace.

Gerry Lewin, Vice-President, Institute of World Culture

For more IWC resources on M. K. Gandhi, please see Professor Raghavan Iyer's book, [Moral and Political Thought of Mahatma Gandhi](#), and "Gandhi on Sarvodaya (Universal Welfare)" by Professor James Tepfer, a seminar paper, available on the IWC webpage:

http://www.worldculture.org/articles/gandhi%20sarvodaya_tepfer.pdf.

In October

Anniversaries

- 1st Marsilio Ficino d. 1499
- 2nd M.K. Gandhi 1869
- 4th St. Francis of Assisi d. 1226
- 5th Denis Diderot 1713
Ramalinga 1823
- 6th Richard Dedekind 1831
Le Corbusier 1887
- 7th Neils Bohr 1885
- 8th B.P. Wadia 1881
- 9th Miguel de Cervantes 1547
- 10th Plotinus d. 270
- 12th Henri Bergson 1859
- 14th William Penn 1644
- 15th Virgil 70 BCE
- 16th Noah Webster
- 17th Marsilio Ficino 1433
- 20th Sir Christopher Wren 1632
- 21st Samuel Taylor Coleridge 1772
- 24th Anton van Leeuwenhoek 1632
- 25th Johann Strauss 1825
- 26th Alfred the Great d. 899
- 28th Desiderius Erasmus 1469
- 30th Christopher Columbus 1451
Paul Valery 1871
- 31st Benvenuto Cellini 1500

Observances

- 2nd Table of atomic weights (Dalton) 1803
- 4th *Sputnik I* enters orbit 1957
- 12th American Indian Day
Columbus Day
- 13th Ramadan ends
Observation of solar eclipse 2128 BCE
- 18th Sarasvati Puja (Hindu)
Quantized atom propounded (Neils Bohr) 1913
- 21st Ancient Greek festival honoring Themis
Demonstration of the electric light (Edison) 1879
- 24th United Nations Day
U.N. Charter signed (San Francisco) 1945

31st All Hallows Eve
Reformation Day

More about the IWC

Website

Please check the Institute website for more information on the year's programs:

<http://www.worldculture.org>

PRISM Online Community Calendar

PRISM lists member-recommended community events of interest on the IWC website. If you wish to contribute a listing for a local or regional community event of interest, please e-mail donna@worldculture.org so it can be considered for inclusion in PRISM.

eNewsletter

If you'd like to contribute to the eNewsletter, please send your ideas to gerry@worldculture.org for consideration.

Membership and Donation Information

Individual Membership \$35

Individual Student Membership \$15

Individual Supporting Membership \$70

Individual Sustaining Membership \$350

To join the Institute, please e-mail memberships@worldculture.org.

The Institute of World Culture is a non-profit 501(c)3 educational organization dedicated to the principles of universal fellowship and life-long learning. It relies solely on the support of its members. Donations to the Institute of World Culture are gratefully accepted and are tax deductible. For those of you wishing to make an enduring contribution to IWC, have you considered providing for IWC in your estate plan or gift planning?

Volunteer Efforts

The Institute offers its programs by means of voluntary efforts.

Please contact carolyn@worldculture.org if you wish to volunteer.