

Populism and the vulnerability of one's own judgement

Our ability to judge correctly depends almost entirely on the facts we know.

Our willingness to express a found judgment also depends on whether we dare to describe and follow our own path based on our own fact-based orientation and, if necessary, to stand for it.

Creating fear of following one's own judgment is the traditional autocratic method of suppressing self-reliance. The traditional means of doing this are censorship, "security forces" and the threat of violence.

This traditional method has a weakness: it comes too late. The right judgment is already in the world. People already feel the contradiction. Now the effort must be made to create fear in order to at least block the consequences of the verdict.

Populism is a method that starts earlier:

The aim of populism is to burden the facts on which a correct judgment can be based with such doubt and uncertainty that well-founded facts are not even used to form an independent judgment.

Donald Trump has revealed in frank terms his real reason for constantly bashing the press, to CBS correspondent Lesley Stahl. She later told of the moment he admitted the real reason for continually bashing the press:

"He said, 'You know why I do it? I do it to discredit you all and demean you all so when you write negative stories about me no one will believe you.'"

This shows, populist criticism has not the purpose to correct a fault in the matter. It has the purpose to protect oneself against being criticized, by demeaning others.

If this works, then you won't be able to make your own correct judgment anymore, because discredited credible facts are not taken into account anymore for founding a judgement.

Instead, the inability to orient oneself based on facts creates a feeling of helplessness, anger and loss of control. This anger is an energy potential. It can be channeled politically.

It is then the task of a leader to use this source of energy for himself and to direct the anger against his political opponents.

And it is this political leader who is now accepted as a reference person by the people he has unsettled, from whom he has taken trustworthy facts and to whom they owe their disorientation and the feeling of loss of control. They now become his followers and he becomes their orientation.

And that is precisely the intended purpose of populism:

No matter what the leader does, facts should not and will not matter to judge him. Fact-based accusations are never justified. The follower's anger will be directed at critics of their caregiver. Criticizing the leader works like criticism of one's own orientation - the belief in the leader.

Facts anyway appear to be dubious and exaggerated. This is the sad result of political self-incapacity by abandoning fact-based thinking. And this abandoning is everyone's own fault. A demagogue only stimulates this defeat.

This is the worst personal defeat a leader can inflict on his followers: the abandonment of their own judgement.

What contempt must a leader have for his followers to humiliate them so badly?

This method is autocratic. It excludes a democratic attitude.