Democratic social policy is presently being confronted with the authoritarian methods of social policy which evolved in 19th century Western Europe. In this context, the author develops the theory that the relevant social question of today is actually the question of democracy. Against the neoclassical theory of political institutions, Widmaier gives a philosophical and theoretical framework for developing a dialogue. Democracy is seen as a way of life, as a not yet completed project and as a process of discovery in dialogue. For Widmaier, self-organization can be used as a means of learning democratic behaviour. The model drawn up by the author also demonstrates the development of social needs as well as alternatives to a bureaucratic government of social policy.

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