Anti-Princess

The following documents were uncovered in the libel suit of Maria Lieb against Neo Winslow and Suxxass LLC. They have been condensed and ordered by conversation as well as roughly chronologically.

Chat log #1

06/03/23

4:37 pm NW

New number who dat? Haha

5:00 pm NW

Timothée, it's dad.

8:55 pm NW

Are you still whiny about that thing?

8:56 pm KB

Are you still an asshole about that thing?

9:01 pm NW (transcribed audio message)

Listen here, Tim, I don't know who raised you to be an ungrateful little shit. Not me. You will not use that kind of language with me. I'm still your father and will always be your father. I'm trying to make an effort here to keep the relationship intact. What you're doing is torpedoing all I'm doing for you. So grow up, get over that phase and call me.

Number blocked by KB

Chat log #2

06/10/23

10:04 am HL

Hey Timothée, it's Hans Lieb from the family office. Can we talk?

Number blocked by KB

Chat log #3

06/11/23

9:56 am HL

Hello Kate, how are you? I'm sorry for dead naming you yesterday. I was not given complete information. Had I known your preferred name, I would never have used that name. I know you don't want to talk to your father or have anything to do with him. You certainly don't have to at the moment, but there are some connections that are not as easily torn down as communication. I'm not talking about anything as metaphysical as familial bonds but rather concrete things like your allowance. Are you willing to talk?

10:23 am KB

So now he wants to blackmail me into being a good girl?

Or rather a good boy.

10:30 am HL

Nooo. No. This is not about threatening you or making you do anything you don't want. It's just about keeping channels open so the bridges aren't burned for good.

10:34 am KB

Why would I want to do that?

10:36 am HL

Well, I was instructed to keep in touch with you in case you had any questions and to be a resource for you to work through any issues you might have.

10:37 am KB

Wtf does that mean?

10:40 am HL

I am a certified CBT practitioner. So I can help with issues you might have.

Number blocked by KB

10/04/23

Number unblocked by KB

9:52 pm KB

What happened to my accounts?

10:08 pm HL

Your father instructed us to freeze them.

10:10 pm KB

Can he do that?

10:11 pm HL

Yes.

10:11 pm KB

Shit.

10:41 pm KB

What does he want from me?

10:43 pm HL

Nothing. Well, not too much. Stay in contact with me and let's see if we can work through some things. He is convinced that you need some counseling.

10:45 pm KB

Yeah, that's the way to start a therapeutic relationship. That nutjob. Does he understand anything about that stuff at all?

10:47 pm HL

I agree. It's not ideal.

But we both have to work with the situation we're thrown into.

10:50 pm KB

Shit.

Okay, as long as I talk to you, I can keep living my life?

10:51 pm HL

That's what I understand.

10:53 pm KB

Okay, ground rules: We're not meeting in person. I decide what we're talking about.

10:55 pm HL

Again, not ideal.

But yes, deal.

Full disclosure: Since this is not a therapeutic relationship, he will probably demand to see the chat logs.

11:00 pm KB

Whatever.

Are you going to unfreeze the account now?

11:03 pm HL

Sure.

10/05/23

10:00 am HL

Should we start? What do you want to talk about?

10/06/23

10:00 am HL

Kate? I'm sure you have a busy schedule, but your father demands that we start.

10/11/23

10:00 am HL

Kate, I don't want to do this, but we'll have to freeze the accounts again, if you refuse to work with me. Please answer me within a week.

10/18/23

9:59 am KB

Okay.

10:03 am HL

Hi Kate, how are you doing?

10:36 am HL

What do you want to talk about?

10:38 am KB

Who are you anyway?

10:40 am HL

I know you looked up my LinkedIn already. What else do you want to know?

10:42 am KB

Why does someone with a master's in business psychology and sociology work in a family office. How are you even qualified for that?

10:45 am HL

Well, there are no formal qualifications you have to have to work in a family office. We're all qualified for our fields of work.

10:47 am KB

So, you're what? The senior bullshitter?

10:50 am HL

Ouch.

Sure, let's call it that. The formal title is senior communications associate.

10:51 am KB

That's what LinkedIn says.

Okay, let's make this more interesting. What kind of a sociologist are you?

11:00 am HL

I would not dare to call myself one.

11:01 am KB

Bullshit. I mean, what was your coursework about?

11:03 am HL

American pragmatism and Chicago school mostly. Stuff that vibed well with psychology and pedagogy.

11:04 am KB

I didn't expect a vibes-guy. :D

11:05 am HL

Maybe I can surprise you.

11:06 am KB

Sure.

11:20 am HL

Well, what are you up to?

11:23 am KB

I'm talking to you, but don't expect me to take this seriously.

10/19/23

10:00 am HL

Hi Kate, how are you?

10:32 am KB

Midterms.

10:33 am HL

Anything interesting?

10:35 am KB

Do you know Omri Boehm?

11:06 am HL

The guy who wants a one state solution for Israel and Palestine?

11:07 am KB

Did you just read his Wikipedia?

11:08 am HL

Umm...

11:10 am KB

Anyway, he's teaching a class on his text about radical universalism. It's really interesting although he's trying to make it about identity politics. Which is stupid.

11:11 am HL

Why?

11:15 am KB

As if we needed more IP bashing...

But his argument is really interesting. He says that actually there is a way to read the Bible in a way that shows how reason is superior to subordination to God's will.

11:17 am HL

How is that interesting to you. I didn't expect you to be a religious person.

11:20 am KB

I'm not.

But so many other people are...

11:23 am HL

Okay, so what's the argument?

11:25 am KB (transcribed audio)

So there is this story about Abraham wanting to kill his son. Well, not wanting to... God tells him to sacrifice his son Isaac. So Abraham goes about doing that because he's the most pious guy ever. But then in the last moment an angel tells him not to. Which is often taken to mean: do what God says even if it doesn't make sense. But Boehm says that in the text there are two different words for God. One is older, the other newer. That means in the original there was no angel in the text. Abraham decided himself not to kill Isaac. And he is rewarded for using his own thinking.

11:40 am HL

What does that mean?

11:45 am KB

It means even the Bible tells us to use our own heads instead of doing what others tell us.

11:47 am HL

Fascinating.

But you're not religious. What does it matter to you?

11:59 am KB

It's important if you want to convince dickheads not to be dickheads.

12:01 pm HL

But the argument assumes that people are really interested in the original meaning of the text. And aren't there a lot of other examples in the Bible contradicting this?

12:10 pm KB

Now you're being a dickhead.

12:12 pm HL

Sorry, I'm just trying to understand where you're going with this.

12:14 pm KB

Nowhere.

I don't know. I just want to make people understand that they're being dickheads.

12:16 pm HL

People? You mean your father?

12:18 pm KB

I didn't know you were into Freud. Is everything about my father? Should we talk about my mother too?

12:19 am HL

If you want to.

12:20 am KB

No!

Forget about it.

10/20/23

10:00 am HL

Hi Kate, how are you?

10:27 am KB

Can you give me some time for the midterms?

10:28 am HL

Sure.

11/05/23

1:45 pm KB

Okay, so I was thinking about our last conversation. Maybe reinterpreting the Bible is not the best way to convince people to think for themselves. Boehm also says that we need role models to learn thinking for ourselves. So it's not about convincing at all. I mean, people don't know that they don't think for themselves. Look at all the right wingers telling us we're sheep for wearing masks in a pandemic or for wanting single-payer healthcare. They even think that fact-checking is a way to be duped. It's so ridiculous. Anyway, according to Boehm we need role models who show the people how to think for themselves instead of just moralizing.

3:20 pm HL

Makes sense.

So the midterms are over?

3:21 pm KB

That's your answer?

3:35 pm HL

No, sorry. I was distracted. I mean, sure, modelling thinking for yourself sounds good. But don't we have the exact opposite at the moment? Instead of moral geniuses we have public figures in the right wing who model flawed thinking.

3:40 pm KB

You mean like my sperm donor? Are you sure you want to have that in a chat log which he is going to read?

3:42 pm HL

He gets the executive summary.

3:43 pm KB

Interesting.

So now I can blackmail you like you blackmailed me. :D

3:44 pm HL

…

3:45 pm KB

I'm just joking. I'm not like you guys. I don't want to ruin anyone's life.

3:46 pm HL

Me neither.

3:47 pm KB

You know what I mean. Cut-throat family office people…

3:48 pm HL

Let's agree to disagree.

3:49 pm KB

Whatever. Let's get back to the argument. I have a paper due and I need to talk about this.

3:50 pm HL

Oh, so you're exploiting me after all.

3:51 pm KB

Yep.

So, the question is: How can a right-wing public figure act as a model for using one's own reason?

Btw „moral genius"... did you read the text?

3:58 pm HL

Yes, I've read it. I'm taking my job seriously.

I think the question you formulated is paradoxical in itself. Why would a right-wing grifter (they are all grifters) model how to use reason?

4:00 pm KB

Damn, that's bleak. Are you even allowed to be that honest?

4:01 pm HL

Don't worry about that.

What does Boehm say about people who don't want to use reason?

4:05 pm KB

I don't know. I guess philosophy has it's limits.

4:06 pm HL

Let's not give up just yet. What do you actually want to do?

4:07 pm KB

I know I can't make the world better just like this. But I want to at least understand why everything is fucked.

4:10 pm HL

Okay, so as someone working in this industry, it's really important for me to know about Narcissism and related syndromes. It makes working with some people easier to just accept that they don't play by the rules.

4:12 pm KB

Yeah, I know that the old man is a narcissist. But how does that help?

4:20 pm HL

Just because they don't care about ethics doesn't mean there are no regularities. Actually a narcissist has some buttons that you can press if you know them.

4:25 pm KB

Yeah, if you don't have self-respect you can just give them whatever they want. What a genius strategy. That worked out well for the whole world...

4:30 pm HL

Tough crowd.

4:32 pm KB

Well, do you have a better idea than that?

4:50 pm HL

Maybe not. But it's more complex than that. Narcissists come in different flavors. Actually it's useful to think about them as authoritarian personalities. That's someone who thinks of the world as being structured in a way where there are some who are naturally on top and some who are at the bottom. When you're above someone you can treat them however you want. When they're above you, they can give you stuff or punish you, so you should always be in their favor. To them you always have to project strength in order to show that you're on top.

5:01 pm KB

How does that help?

5:10 pm HL

Well, you need to show them that they're reliant on you and cannot just discard you or exploit you.

5:12 pm KB

I guess the fact that you are talking to me shows that the old man can't discard me. But that doesn't make being in the same room with him any more bearable.

5:13 pm HL

True.

11/06/23

1:50 am KB

Are you a flying monkey?

6:35 am HL

What do you mean?

12:01 pm KB

I've read some more about Narcissism. Flying monkeys are people who do the work of keeping people close to narcissists. They are convinced by the narcissist that the victim is actually the perpetrator who has to apologize and make amends. That's fucked up.

12:06 pm HL

I don't think that telling you I'm not will make a difference. Technically, structurally I am a flying monkey. My job is to keep the connection and I guess your father expects me to do something like conversion therapy. That doesn't mean that's what I'm trying to do though. Since nobody is monitoring our conversation yet, I will just talk to you without any hidden agenda.

12:10 pm KB

I'm not sure that's reassuring.

12:12 pm HL

Fair.

What else did you read about?

12:20 pm KB

So there is this theory that there are four different kinds of being a bad person. The dark tetrad.

12:25 pm HL

Narcissism, machiavellianism, psychopathy, and sadism.

12:26 pm KB

So you know about it.

12:27 pm HL

Yeah, why is that interesting to you?

12:28 pm KB

I guess the old men is all of those. More or less.

12:28 pm HL

Well, we are all on the spectrum somewhere. That's not a clinical, but rather a social psychological theory.

12:30 pm KB

Okay, so he is somewhere up there.

12:31 pm HL

I might want to choose my words carefully here.

12:32 pm KB

I thought you didn't care.

12:40 pm HL (transcribed audio)

Okay, yeah, he's way up there. Every billionaire is. You can't be one without being able to abstract from other people's lives. Machiavellianism is a precondition for being a politician or business person. It's the grease that makes economies and countries work. But your father isn't that. He has become more of a psychopath who is not able to even pretend to take anyone's welfare into consideration. He just takes what he wants and has to face the consequences later—without being able to learn from them. He is also a sadist who likes to be mean and inconsiderate because it feels great to humiliate others. Also he thinks it makes him look cool, which is part of his Narcissism. In the world of social media narcissists are mainly motivated by being seen and liked by huge anonymous groups of people. As I said yesterday that is actually a kind of authoritarianism where the Führer is not a person but the amorphous blob of the users—sometimes mistaken for citizens.

1:01 pm KB

Ha, sounds like you dislike him even more than I do.

1:03 pm HL

I'm going to be fired...

1:04 pm KB

Probably, but thank you anyway.

11/07/23

12:04 pm KB

Still there?

12:09 pm HL

Seems like.

No one has time to look at the chat logs.

12:11 pm KB

Okay, so I have to write a term paper in sociology and I was thinking about the dark tetrad.

12:12 pm HL

That's a psychological theory though.

12:14 pm KB (transcribed audio)

Yeah, I know. Hear me out. So, there is this guy in my class, Micha. Think of him like a small town version of the old man. He is stupid as fuck, but his parent is working for

fartAI. So he has a preview account that is actually able to give well-structured scientific answers and he aces all term papers. Everyone knows this, but there aren't any rules yet about what kind of AI resources you can and cannot use. I mean, sure, you could view this as arbitrage of innovation, but to me that sounds stupid. It's cheating that simply cannot be detected yet, because there are no rules. And for some stuff, there never will be rules. Let's say Micha's parents give some money to the university for a new building... you know how it's done... maybe this kind of behavior will always stay allowed.

Okay, now here is where the sociology comes in. Micha can only do this in the circles he's in—which are quite small. School, his family, a baseball team... I don't know. But the old man on the other hand: He's doing this to all of society. The economy, social media, government... you name it.

And it's not the kind of grease that self-interest and strategic thinking give society, but destructive psychopathic sadism. So how do you account for... evil in society?

12:40 pm HL

Now that's interesting. I just googled your question. Apparently there are two different sets of ideas about evil in society. One is from the Chinese security strategy and the other from a speech by Martin Luther King Jr.

12:43 pm KB

I'd be surprised if they were similar in any way. But how do they differ?

12:50 pm HL

The Chinese see separatism, extremism, and terrorism as the major problems.

12:51 pm KB

Sounds like all governments actually. But that has nothing to do with what we were talking about, right?

12:53 pm HL

King says it's militarism, excessive materialism, and racism.

12:55 pm KB

Makes sense, but still not closely related.

1:06 pm HL

Yeah, well, I'd have to think about it.

11/08/23

9:33 am KB

Maybe the two different concepts of societal evil are not mutually exclusive. On the one hand we have the perspective of stability. Something is bad, because it is dangerous for the status quo. Like Micha is threatening educational equality. But MLK is talking about how the status quo is bad. Like the old man exploiting workers in his factories.

Not a sociological theory yet though.

10:00 am HL

Yeah, I think you would have to start somewhere else. The evils are more like the result of the process.

Also, why would someone like your father care about those?

10:05 am KB

What he cares about is himself.

10:12 am HL (transcribed audio)

Sociologically that's interesting. Narcissism is not an historical constant. It was produced by society. Christopher Lasch thought that modern society breeds Narcissism. He and his followers basically thought that coddling the youth produces it. But I'm more fond of the explanations for authorianism: a harsh, authoriation upbringing. Maybe it's both though: a German sociologist had this idea that both rugged individualism and individual rights have become increasingly important to the point where people aren't willing to accept that their rights come with any accompanying duties.

Now, I'm not saying that all the evils come from individualism run amok. Certainly the past had its evils. But if you look at the way exploitation and so on are enacted, people being atomized has a lot to do with it.

10:20 am KB (transcribed audio)

But, like, isn't individualism also the result of people acting how they want, consequences be damned? I mean if you take rugged individualism that's something people use to explain why they don't want to help others or pay their taxes.

No, wait. I mean, yes that's true but at the same time people don't take stuff from the welfare state, because they think they should be self-sufficient. I'm confused.

10:33 am HL (transcribed audio)

Exactly, individualism stems from the awareness that self-reliance is good as well as from the wish not to be responsible for others. Take the issue of individual rights as well: they were expanded because of people struggling for equality. But at the same time they made people more atomized, because their reliance on others wasn't as big.

10:40 am KB (transcribed audio)

So we have this thing, individualism, which is bad but it stems from people wanting good stuff?

10:45 am HL (transcribed audio)

I mean, it's not even bad per se. I like my individual rights and self-reliance is good, when you are able to take care of yourself. It's just that the way the world is bad has to do with individualism. Look, weirdly enough, individualism breeds racism, because people feel so isolated that they are desperate to attach themselves to any group that gives them the feeling of belonging to a superior stratum in society. You know, Eric Hoffer believed that the best recruiting grounds for the fascists in Weimar Germany were the communists and vice versa because each group attracted the people who were most desperate and isolated from society. Whoever gave them a cause to fight and to die for, had their support.

11:04 am KB

Huh, that's crazy.

Sorry, gotta go.

11/15/23

11:01 pm KB

Hey, still there?

11:05 am HL

I didn't want to intrude. You can talk to me anytime.

11:07 pm KB

I've written something. Can you take a look? Maybe do some editing?

I'll send you the file.

11:08 pm HL

Sure.

11:10 pm KB

File „crises draft.docx' sent.

Chat log #3 tbc

Crises draft.docx

Crises of cohesion

Late modernity is characterized by a multitude of overlapping crises of cohesion that are not accidental but a necessary product of the historical processes that constitute modernity at its core. The climate crisis is only the most visible and obviously dangerous of these crises. The interconnected phenomena of hyperindividualization, demographic change, increasing inequality, radicalization, and discrimination exacerbate the climate catastrophe by making us unable to react in concert.

It seems obvious that the crises of the next decades cannot be overcome by newinnovative technologies alone. Both energy transition and climate adaptation measures are based on only partially existing societal preconditions. The will for radical changes in mobility, the economy and energy production does not exist either in politics or among the population. Sociologist Harald Welzer emphasizes that most people are aware of climate change but are adapting their perceptions rather than their behavior. (In contrast to twenty years ago, biodiversity has declined alarmingly, compared to last year not so much). This phenomenon is called shifting baselines. At the same time the reaction is also partly only affective: People still fly, but with a guilty conscience. In both cases, we only attempt to reduce dissonance. These strategies are basically new forms of climate change denial. Bruno Latour and Nikolaj Schultz blame the inability of the climate movement to appeal to the relevant values and affects of the population. Accordingly, we must understand and embrace the fight against climate denial as a political task.

There is even less willingness to bear the consequences of human-caused climate change in solidarity. Financial assistance is simply not forthcoming for countries that cannot afford climate adaptation from their own resources. How can we make sure that people take responsibility for nature and fellow human beings? Appeals to reason and a sense of duty will not achieve this. The basis of solidary action is the self-understanding of being part of a whole in which solidarity also benefits oneself. The primal communism (in the sense of unconditional solidarity and care) lived in families and close-knit communities is based on a deeply felt similarity. At the level of complex societies this mechanism cannot work. Strong social cohesion requires solidarity that transcends cultural boundaries. The apparent solution of creating a culturally homogeneous population through violence is non: cultural homogenization is just another word for (cultural) genocide. On the world-society level, it is even more complicated. The world republic will probably remain a dream (or nightmare for some) for the foreseeable future. Supranational organizations and transnational solidarity remain confined to regions. Global institutions are ineffective, oriented toward securing debt payments, or dependent on handouts from the richest states, which can be withdrawn at any time in the event of austerity politics. Interdependence and conflict remain as the only modes

of integration of world society. But this dismal state stems from the fundamental crisis of cohesion in modern society.

Doing cohesion

Cohesion describes a series of phenomena that have a family resemblance, i.e., they are not reducible to a central essence, but are easily recognizable as cohesive phenomena: accepting the government even though you didn't vote for it; paying your taxes; asking strangers if they can watch your suitcase for a moment. As you can see from the examples, the concept is located somewhere between tolerance and solidarity. Tolerance means not doing anything about something you disapprove of, while solidarity means standing up for others. Whereby, however, both are not to be understood absolutely. Tolerance refers only to behavior that does not threaten one's own existence, and solidarity can refer only to certain groups, because otherwise it would become ineffective.

Keeping something together means not letting it fall apart. However, this holding together does not merge with its two neighboring concepts and thus has its own raison d'être in political theory. What is held together is today a complex society based on the division of labor. But our ancestors also had to hold together. Cooperation, as Frans de Waal's research with primates shows, is a necessity for all living creatures that live together in groups, no matter how small. But what this cohesion looks like differs greatly between small communities and complex societies. Émile Durkheim summed this up when he distinguished between mechanical solidarity, which is based on shared values and connectedness, and organic solidarity, which results from interdependence based on the division of labor. In fact, however, even complex society is held together not only by interdependence and barter; it is precisely the trust in the interstices that lubricates the gears of society. Without it, it falls back into a state of prehistoric segmentation.

However, cohesion does not only refer to the prevention of social regression but can also be understood progressively: as support for social innovations out of concern (both in the sense of worry and care) for and for the future of society. It can be stated that cohesion is something that must be done: People need to stick together. This active holding together is referred to in international research as doing cohesion. Thus, it takes the form of concepts such as doing gender, which indicate that something is produced and maintained through the activity, if not work, of people. Like gender identity, cohesion must be permanently performed or performed by those involved for it to have some continuity.

As the sociologist Harold Garfinkel pointed out, the successful performance of gender identity (the so-called passing, i.e., being recognized in the gender identity presented to the outside world) requires a certain virtuosity on the part of the performer. Neither can one assume that a male, female or even non-binary identity will be recognized by the

counterpart on the basis of an inner essence, nor is it enough to hang a sign with the word „woman" around one's neck. Continuous passing is an enormous achievement, behind which lie years of practice. This is just as true for the successful performance of cohesion: you cannot spontaneously decide that you now want to live in a society with strong cohesion; you have to contribute to it constantly.

Unlike gender, cohesion does not initially appear to be an individual characteristic of a person. But if you look more closely, there are other similarities. What gender and cohesion mean in a speech community is communicatively constructed. This means that people have talked about what these categories mean and have more or less explicitly agreed on definitions. None of the phenomena can be understood without knowing what people mean by them. But since people never stop problematizing the phenomenon, the definitions are also never very stable.

Cohesion, like gender identity, can be understood as an individual trait. The Bertelsmann Stiftung, for example, studies social cohesion as an aggregate of the cohesion orientations of people in a geographical unit. Thus, each individual has an attitude that is more or less conducive to cohesion, from which in turn (filtered through emotions, habits, physical abilities, and limited information) certain actions result that are more or less cohesion-oriented. A person's cohesion orientation is as much a bundle of practices as is gender identity.

But social cohesion itself is, of course, also a macro phenomenon that results from the interaction of many more or less cohesive people (again mediated by institutions, media, technologies and networks). In this respect, however, it is no different from the gender order of society, which can currently be described as patriarchy (albeit to a lesser extent than half a century ago). This reference to patriarchy is instructive because it points out that cohesion is a normatively empty concept unless it is given another adjective—be it national, democratic, solidarity, or otherwise. Only from this closer designation does it become clear what practices doing cohesion must encompass. Similarly, the practices of gender order are not understandable if one does not designate them as patriarchy.

Individualization

The central historical process challenging social cohesion is individualization. This refers to the development of the self-understanding that each person is an individual who has individual rights and maximizes their own utility. This process is often told as a success story of modernity. To be sure, it is an advance over a self-understanding of people as aristocrats or subjects in a hierarchical society. However, the solution to the problem raises new problems, which now have to be dealt with.

According to the individualization thesis, the division of labor and the weakening of social ties led to increasing self-determination. Starting from the upper classes, people

increasingly took themselves as responsible for the course of their lives. Norbert Elias described this change as a tipping of the we-ego balance from a strong we-identity to a strong ego-identity. People's self-concept changed from one determined by membership in a community to one determined by individual characteristics. One of the consequences was the dissolution of traditional social structures (*atomization*).

It is a common misunderstanding to associate individualization with "the West". Quite the opposite: The destruction of traditional social structures was imposed on colonies with even more violence than in the Western centers. Napoleon III can be considered the first modern autocrat. After several failed coup attempts, he was not only elected France's first president, but after successfully establishing a dictatorship, he appointed himself emperor as the second Bonaparte. His attempts to „modernize" Algeria, annexed by France in 1830, had fatal consequences. The Algerian tribes, which had previously been left to extensive local self-government by the Ottoman Empire, were to be disempowered and incorporated into the French nation by promising Algerians French citizenship if they turned away from their Muslim culture and religion. The consequence of French interference was the dismantling of Algeria's social structure and a resistance struggle against the colonial power France that lasted more than a century. Algeria is by no means the only country in which attempts at modernization have destroyed existing and functioning structures of self-government and social reproduction. Rather, we are dealing with varieties of modernity all over the world, which, while not corresponding to the same development model, are all reactions to the irritation of traditional structures by capitalism and colonialism. Even in societies that are portrayed as particularly traditional, such as Afghanistan, there were beginnings of modernization as early as the 19th century. Anthropologist Thomas Barfield argues that Afghanistan's current state must be understood as an attempt to render itself ungovernable in the face of the Soviet invasion in the 1980s. Taliban fundamentalism is a reaction, not an anachronism. Individualization has led everywhere to a destabilization of social structures and the release of revolutionary potential.

In late modernity, i.e., since the 1970s, an acceleration of individualization can be observed. The individual historical developments contributing to hyperindividualization can only be touched upon here. Particularly prominent is the interpretation that late modernity is characterized by culturalization and the spread of a singularized way of life. Whereas in the mass society of the postwar period, normality and belonging had been particularly emphasized, the uniqueness of individuals, things, and processes was increasingly stressed. While it is still in fact a society of standardized mass consumption, great value is placed on setting oneself apart from others and consuming things that have the aura of uniqueness. At the same time, a new middle class has emerged that strives for social advancement through the acquisition of education. The old middle class of skilled workers felt threatened by this advancement, as they lacked the skills to compete with the new middle class under conditions of constant

technological change. This precariousness and resulting insecurity led to a strengthening of reactionary forces from the old middle class.

Contrary to the Pater Noster effect described above (one elevator up, the other down), another diagnosis describes the development since the 1970s as a *continuous run up the escalator*. The middle class is permanently busy trying to prevent the downward spiral, which, however, can hardly be averted in the long term. To this end, they are constantly trying to distinguish themselves from the lower class. In this context, there is also talk of an increasing acceleration that is overtaxing everyone.

The working society has been transformed into a meritocracy in which work itself is no longer recognized, but only performance. In addition to the overexertion of the entire population, there is also a continuous violation of the dignity of those who do not receive the recognition that is attributed to high achievers.

Demographic change

Parallel to the cultural change of individualization/singularization, there is a demographic change that is taking hold (to a differing extent) around the world. Thanks to the Green Revolution and developments in modern medicine, unparalleled population growth was possible in the twentieth century, causing the world's population to grow from two to eight billion people in the last one hundred years. The population growth was simultaneously accompanied by a growth in prosperity in some regions that led families to have fewer and fewer children. While the number of children is still high in some countries, population growth in others is due only to aging populations. According to demographer Hans Rosling, the world has already reached *peak child,* the highest number of people under eighteen.

For aging societies, this has serious consequences in all areas of life. Let us take a look at the example of Germany: The problem starts, of course, with pensions, which have had to be supported by a subsidy from the federal budget since 1998 and have since risen nominally from 5 to over 100 billion (from a share of 2% of the federal budget to a share of 25%). Thus, while pension contributions and pensions can be stabilized, policymakers have less and less leeway for investment. At the same time, the aging of the population is also leading to increasing growth in the fields of nursing and health care, for which there are already too few personnel available that could only be recruited through an immigration policy. However, an active immigration policy is made more difficult by the fact that the aging population is increasingly electing conservative to reactionary parties. These prevent not only necessary reforms of migration policy, but also progressive policies in the areas of energy transition, climate adaptation, distributive justice, inheritance law and anti-discrimination. As a result of all these factors, politics is becoming less and less capable of action.

Civil society could benefit from a larger number of active older people with free time and assets. In fact, however, many civil society organizations complain about aging because too few young people participate. Due to the failing succession of generations, knowledge is lost in many fields. This is also becoming problematic in the working world: pathology, for example, has now become a small group of physicians with fewer than 1,000 members in Germany. Because retiring pathologists are not replaced, practical knowledge is lost that cannot be retained so quickly. The art of autopsy is thus existentially threatened—which in turn makes disease prevention less effective. This example shows how even the seemingly cumulatively advancing sciences can be affected by a decline in population. But the problem is not unique to highly professionalized fields such as pathology. The skilled trades as a whole will have to contend with a shortage of young talent and deprofessionalization in the coming years. Sociologist Stefan Schulz says that demographic change will have a similarly fatal impact on cohesion as the external shocks of the climate crisis.

Finally, social inequality increases because the assets earned over a lifetime are in the hands of the older generation and are used, especially by renting out real estate, to make the renters work for their landlords. The beneficiaries are primarily the descendants through generous inheritance laws.

While the situation is severe in Germany, China—which lacks a social security system for seniors and faces drastically sinking birth rates—is heading towards unpredictable peril.

Inequality and polarization

In the form of the political ideology of neoliberalism, individualization has led to a desolidarization of politics. The influence of trade unions has been pushed back and „activating" policies have contributed to a widening of social inequalities. The gap between wealth continues to widen and is currently reaching unprecedented highs.

Moreover, the highly unequal use of resources, dedicated to individual utility maximization, has triggered climate change that can hardly be controlled anymore, leading to extreme weather, natural disasters, wars, famines, and migration movements, and will lead to their expansion on an even greater scale. The resulting intensified resource competitions will lead to further desolidarization. The material and moral costs of climate change and the overexploitation of the planet's resources, flora and fauna are simply immeasurable.

Sociologist Steffen Mau outlines four lines of conflict in late modernity:

1. *Top-bottom inequality: there are class differences between the wealthy and the destitute.*
2. *Internal-external inequality: There are wealth disparities between central*

and peripheral states in the world economy.

3. *We-they inequality: there are differences in the recognition of different identities.*
4. *Today-Tomorrow Inequality: There are differences in life chances between current and future generations.*

This results in complex conflict situations, which even within political parties lead to differences that can hardly be bridged. The metaphor of polarization, which implies a division of society into two parts, is perhaps less appropriate than that of fragmentation. But the public perception of polarization is often way off regarding the real fault lines of the fragmented society.

Political scientist Bernard E. Harcourt points out that polarization discourses are used extensively these days to create a dichotomy between the government side and insurgents/terrorists, which apparently can only be resolved by destroying these enemies of the state. So, one should be careful when talking about polarization—not only because of this *slippery slope* into authoritarian ways of thinking, but also because it makes the rest of the population look like nothing more than a manipulable mass. Even the non-radicalized political center must be understood as an actor with interests and strategies, rather than just a shifting mass of the political elites.

The takeover of discourses and institutions by elites (which Olúfẹ́mi O. Táíwò calls *elite capture)* is important in the context of inequality and polarization. Elites appropriate the vocabulary of identity politics to give political parties a progressive veneer, but redeem it only on a symbolic level. While memorials to colonialism and other historical atrocities are readily erected, they take no concrete steps to remedy the effects still felt today. The fewer promises that are kept, the shriller the accompanying rhetoric becomes.

In order to legitimize the inequalities and externalized costs, mass media discourses are produced that cause political polarization. These include myths that legitimize wealth (and its inadequate taxation): 1. money will reach the poor through the investments and consumption of the rich (*trickle-down economics*). 2. the *invisible hand* of the market will correct all supply and demand imbalances by itself. 3. the ultra-rich are superhuman *self-made men* whose wealth is not based on inheritance and connections. On the other hand, there are out-group-hostile and conspiracy-theoretical myths that are activated in moral panics and serve to conceal practices of hubris.

The apparent polarization is supported by the new structural change of the public sphere, which accompanied the introduction of social media. International relations scholar Paula Köhler suggests taking a realistic view of the role of social media. Polarization does not exist in the population itself but is a simulacrum of social media: There, she says, there are increasingly personalized disputes between political elites and opinion makers and equally unrepresentative online trolls, which have an impact on the culture of debate outside.

Systems researcher Petter Törnberg points out that the problem is not the frequently invoked echo chamber that leads to a fragmentation of the public sphere. Rather, social media confronts us with opposing opinions that we would not have received at all in the past. When individuals interacted at the local level, the result was a stable pluralistic patchwork of overlapping conflicts, he said. By promoting non-local interaction, digital media drove an equalization of conflicts along partisan lines, negating the equalizing effects of diversity in social space. The result is polarization, while face-to-face conversations can lead to agreement.

The ability of politicians to reach consensus is waning. While this development is more visible in other countries than in Germany (where, according to the Bertelsmann Stiftung's Populism Barometer 2020 , populist attitudes were less pronounced than in the previous year), the all-clear cannot be given here either.

Social media may increasingly become an important arena for disputes. But these also continue to take place in everyday life. Demonstrations and direct confrontations, up to and including acts of violence, are sometimes palpable on the one hand, but on the other hand are also boiled up by the classic media in a *culture of chatter* that can lead to a perceived threat situation that inspires the compartmentalization of individual milieus.

Segregation and radicalization

Individual social worlds are turning away from the public sphere and politics. They reject the minimal consensus of the liberal democratic basic order. A segregation milieu arises when a milieu becomes a total world of meaning for its members, i.e., when all external points of reference become irrelevant and only internal values and institutions are important. From the perspective of the majority and diverse society, and especially from the perspective of the state, this process presents itself as radicalization.

How radicalization is influenced by experiences of discrimination is controversial. While these can contribute to people feeling alienated, this can also be caused by other factors, such as personal failures. In addition, there is ideologization by actors who exploit this alienation to mobilize people for their own purposes. The ideologies used for this purpose generally come from the realm of reactions to imperialist and capitalist modernity: national socialism, Marxism-Leninism, Wahhabism/Salafism or nowadays antivax, sovereign citizens, and QAnon. What these ideologies have in common is a certain tendency to concentrate power in a small elite.

Elite segregationist milieus often use three sequential strategies to attract and retain new members: Conversion, Conditioning, and Coercion. Central to all these phases is the establishment of a strict (especially linguistic) separation between in-group and out-group, between „us" and „the others." The positive representation of the in-group is accompanied by a vilification of the out-group. In the conversion phase, this serves *love-bombing*: new members are approached individually, their problems are addressed, and

the advantages of membership are pointed out. In the conditioning phase, a strong attachment to the milieu and their leadership is created. The impression is given that one's goals can only be realized in the group. Solidarity and belonging are suggested by speaking a common special language. Finally, coercion ranges from social control to threats and the use of physical violence.

In segregation milieus, a small group often benefits, while the majority of members trade off gains in security and a sense of belonging for difficulties in connecting with the majority society.

Group-related misanthropy

The *theory of social disintegration* describes how the unfulfilled promises of modernity (to participation and prosperity) lead to a raw civility (or group-based misanthropy). A „radicalized conservatism" emerges. Racism, xenophobia, anti-feminism, etc. run rampant. It is almost ironic that individualism leads to collectivizing vilifications via detours. However, there are also perspectives that emphasize not so much the connection between precarity and misanthropy, but the historical continuities. Maria Alexopoulou says that there has been a historical continuity between the concepts of "Rasse" and "Ausländer" after the Nazis in that they both deny the right of presence as others and seem to construct a natural hierarchy. So, one must speak of the ever-present group-based misanthropy becoming more relevant to action for many people as a result of the above-mentioned tendencies. Alexopoulou points to the continuity with Nazi Germany, but the lines can of course be traced even further back in history.

Chat log #3 continued

12:06 pm HL

Did you write this yourself?

12:08 pm KB

Yeah, why do you even ask.

12:13 pm HL

Because I wrote that in German. It's an essay on LinkedIn.

12:14 pm KB

Hahahaha

12:15 pm HL

Yeah, really funny. I wouldn't use that though. It's too German for an American university.

12:16 pm KB

It was just a troll. Chill.

So, individualism leads to inequality leads to polarization leads to segregation leads to hate... sounds a little bit like Yoda.

12:20 pm HL

Yep, real Jedis fight against individuality... no, wait, that actually sounds more like fascists.

Or communists.

I guess it depends on what you see as the opposite of individualism.

12:24 pm KB

Huh?

12:26 pm HL

Sure, the opposite of individual freedom is collectivism, but the opposite of individualism is a different kind of freedom. Have you read Simone de Beauvoir?

12:28 pm KB

Haha...

12:29 pm HL

Yeah, I know, French existentialism sounds like a horrible read. But there is a great Philosophize this-Episode on her ethics of ambiguity. You should give it a try.

12:30 pm KB

Okay, let's see.

1:24 pm KB

Wow.

1:25 pm HL

What did you think?

1:28 pm KB

First of all: What a mean bitch. :D

Everyone who isn't as enlightened as her is a baby.

1:30 pm HL

There are elements of that, true.

But I love the way she shows us how being separate from others makes us less free. The perfectly atomized individual is not free, because the people around them cannot be free in the same way.

1:37 pm KB

Yeah, kind of like Latour says that we are all networks. We are not separate from the things around us, because without them we would not be able to act in any way. Without my pants I can't go outside. Without my cat I can't relax. Without you I can't philosophize now.

1:40 pm HL

Haha, thank you. I'm blushing. ;)

Honestly though, that's a great comparison. Made me think of how pharaohs were buried with their stuff and their serfs, because otherwise they wouldn't be complete.

1:45 pm KB

But those pharaohs weren't free. According to Beauvoir they couldn't be free, because their servants were slaves. And if they were a part of them, neither was free.

1:56 pm HL

You're right. Love can only be given freely. It starts with the parents. If they don't give their love freely, the child can't develop trust and a lot of psychological problems come downstream.

1:58 pm KB

I feel attacked right now.

2:00 pm HL

I mean, yeah, developmental psychology is hard on all of us. But would you disagree?

2:01 pm KB

No, you're probably right. Trust is not something that comes easy.

2:06 pm HL

Axel Honneth has built a whole theory on how recognition helps us develop trust in people, our abilities, and society. You need someone to really love you, someone to really acknowledge your accomplishments, and someone to honestly judge your actions.

That is also what resonance is about. You have to have the feeling that you can really change things in the world. Otherwise you drift into depression.

Actually without resonance you can't even be a person. Everybody is able to move little objects, sure. But to be able to influence greater things, to improve their lives and others makes people into political animals and therefore whole persons.

2:16 pm KB

So, you can only become free by helping others to become more whole?

2:18 pm HL

Something like that. But you're only really free if everyone else is free.

2:20 pm KB

Now we're back to Narcissism. As long as there is Narcissism in the world, people can't be really free. They can only think of themselves.

That's depressing.

2:26 pm HL

It's even worse. While we can maybe get rid of Narcissism in a world where we're all equal, psychopathy is just a fact of nature. As far as I know there isn't really anything we could do about it. Some people are just born without the ability to learn from negative consequences.

Well, there are some eugenicists lying in wait in the direction of this train of thought, but let's just not go there.

2:28 pm KB

Yep.

2:30 pm HL

Okay, let's do it like Micha. We'll just ask an AI.

2:31 pm KB

Haha, enjoy yourself.

10:21 pm HL

Can I send you something?

10:22 pm KB

Sure.

10:23 pm HL

File „what to do about psychopathy.docx' sent.

I had some fun with my AI subscription.

10:30 pm KB

You don't expect me to read all this right now, do you?

10:31 pm HL

Whenever it suits you.

Chat log #3 tbc

what to do about psychopathy.docx

1 Punishment, prison, rehabilitation

Modern society seems to have one response to deviance above all: Punishment. Those who break the law must pay fines or go to prison. But this does not seem to be a sustainable strategy. Punishment itself can only be understood as a sadistic practice, which in turn produces humiliations that can lead to the vicious circle of revenge.

James Gilligan's research points in a direction that may well open up therapeutic possibilities through humane treatment in the prison system. He refers to inmates whose violence is a reaction to a hostile environment and can be seen as an almost rational deterrent strategy in prison.

The Norwegian prison island of Bastøy is repeatedly cited as a positive example. There, offenders „enjoy" a privileged existence. Although the sea separates them from the rest of the population, they can live a self-reliant life without humiliation. The sociologist Victor Lund Shammas has researched island life and worked out how the inmates experience their situation. He contrasts Sykes' *pains of imprisonment* with five *pains of freedom*: Confusion, Anxiety and Limitlessness, Ambiguity, Relative Deprivation, and Individual Responsibility. All not particularly pleasant experiences, but on a quite different level from the deprivations of imprisonment. Rather than creating a situation in which narcissistic injury is triggered, a destabilizing malaise is caused. Open enforcement creates ambiguity about what appear to be clearly beneficial goods and privileges. A *relative* deprivation arises in the face of the *taste of freedom*. Finally, a notion of individual responsibility in self-improvement and discipline is fostered.

Shammas concludes with Foucault that progressive prisons punish better, not less. But this does not seem to me to capture the essence of these institutions. One should think of the *pains of freedom* as experiences of equal humanity. Not only are inmates slowly introduced to a life of freedom, but they experience that freedom as one of humility, not humiliation.

2 Culture of humility

Within social worlds, there are effective institutions to deal with anomic behavior. They are found in segmented societies where people live together in smaller groups. The !kung have strong norms against the hubris of individuals. Individual success is punished with non-respect to disrespect to prevent arrogance. Thus, no one can build up too strong a position in the group, which would be exploited to the detriment of others.

Iconic studies of these societies show that boasting and other self-aggrandizing behaviors are not allowed. Offenders are teased, ignored, banned from camp, or, in

extreme cases, killed. Humility, humor, and strict protocols about distributing meat helped keep people on an even footing, says Boehm, who has surveyed the ethnographic literature. For example, kung people traditionally downplay their accomplishments: A hunter will say he's caught only a small skinny animal, even if it's big and meaty, and his comrades will agree. „You have to demean yourself," Boehm says.

Lee and his colleagues, who observed the Ju/'hoansi/!Kung for years, found that to counter differences in hunting prowess, men exchange arrows before they hunt. The owner of the arrow, not the bowman himself, gets the credit and decides how to distribute the meat while everyone looks on.

Other traditional societies have similar customs, Boehm found in an unpublished analysis. Of today's 330 foraging societies, he examined 56 that live in conditions resembling those of Paleolithic hunter-gatherers. Among these groups, having someone other than the successful hunter distribute the meat „is universal," he says. (Pennisi, 2014, Science)

Those who do not abide by the rules of moderation can simply be cast out. Erich Fromm summarizes the strategies of tribal societies: In the absence of bureaucratic sanctioning possibilities, one initially relies on custom and etiquette. Those who do not adhere to them are initially treated more rudely and shunned. People gossip about such deviants and, in extreme cases, exclude them from the community. This can mean exile or death.

The !Kung do not fight hubris in its full-blown glory first but avoid letting it arise in the first place. What can be learned from this? They show what a postal service society could look like. Strictly uniform pay for all workers would create an atmosphere in which everyone would be willing to perform what is necessary. Overcoming meritocratic thinking and the work society would bring to light the inherent motivation of people to contribute to their communities and improve the world. This requires the humility of the money and power elite to overcome their negative view of humanity, after all they are the only ones who really contribute.

As discussed at length in the section on hubris, humiliation (as practiced by the !Kung) is a problematic strategy for teaching humility. Individual humiliation inflicts a pain that brings to light *coping strategies that* can take the form of dark tetrad syndromes. However, a culture of equivalence and preemptive abhorrence of arrogance, can make individual humiliation unnecessary.

This is not to argue for a cultural revolution, but a cultural shift away from sexist and racist topoi in pop culture is already evident. Just as James Bond in the films of the 2000s no longer simply knocks out the Bond girl when she becomes „hysterical," hyper-individualized strategies may one day become less attractive. We can already find a popular critique of hubris in films like *American Psycho* or *Wolf of Wall Street*. Unfortunately, there are just still enough Ayn Rand readers who unironically revere the protagonists of these films.

The *restorative justice* movement seeks to remove the negotiation of how to deal with injustice from the justice system. It draws both symbolically and substantively on non-European traditions of conflict resolution from Maori to Native American nations. Her approaches have been most strongly anchored in New Zealand's juvenile justice system, in which court hearings are only used when mediation involving offenders and victims as well as their families and communities fails. The rationale behind this approach is surprisingly similar to the death penalty credo: a wrong must be balanced with an equivalent action. However, while the death penalty takes a life for a life, *restorative justice* seeks to set a constructive action against the destructive one. Thus, the symbolic, material, and psychological wound torn by a violent act should be healed as much as possible. Theoretically, this principle is applicable at every level of coexistence.

The indignities of the justice system can be overcome in this paradigm and, at the very least, the vicious cycle of punishment and relapse into delinquency can be broken.

3 Ostracism

In urban societies such as Athenian democracy, ostracism was an instrument for counteracting the hubris of individuals. The sources are not clear, but it seems that in the fifth century B.C.E., public figures were banished from the polis by negative vote for ten years on a relatively regular basis (about 20 cases are documented). The reasons ranged from sexual misconduct to an influence on the population that was considered too great. Exile deprived them of the opportunity to inflict further damage on the polis.

Exclusion from central social positions is also possible in modern society. Democracy, for example, explicitly allows for the deselection of parliamentarians and heads of government who turned out to be unsuitable. Donald Trump, for example, was voted out by a large majority. Nevertheless, his influence on American politics remains overwhelming. Similarly, his implicit role model, Silvio Berlusconi, has already been voted out of office several times and has had to face countless criminal trials. What both have in common, however, is that they want to face the election again. There has been no curtailment of their political rights, despite obvious abuses.

The ostracism was not a criminal trial. It did not decide on a punishment. Rather, it was determined by election that a person's influence on the public sphere was no longer desired. Today, we speak of ostracisms in the context of the so-called *cancel culture*. This refers to processes of public shaming and condemnation (up to and including *de-platforming*), which are carried out by a virtual mob in social media and often spill over into offline lifeworlds. Doxxing can lead to consequences such as job losses for insensitive but harmless jokes. Yet it rarely hits those actors who have an outsized negative impact on cohesion. It is more likely to be random people flushed into the spotlight by algorithmic processes whose lives are destroyed by online mobs. Even more

disturbing is the trend of pressuring journalists through concerted online campaigns. So, the Twitter mob or the 4chan troll army are no substitute for the original institution of the ostracism.

As the de-platforming of Donald Trump through social media has shown, however, it can certainly show partial success. The only problem remains the fundamentally undemocratic control by companies. These processes would have to be designed according to political and not economic aspects. On the one hand, this includes the blocking of accounts by democratically legitimized courts. On the other hand, a more direct democratic administration and independent financing of the media in the form of a *Publikative* or *Investigative* could introduce a control that would wrest the media from market logic and thus from the dictatorship of audience ratings or subscriber numbers.

But let us take the idea literally once again. In *Brave New World,* the ultimate instrument of repression of dissent is exile on secluded islands. The viciousness of this measure never fully dawned on me. It probably lies more in the undemocratic process than in the punishment. Exile by universal suffrage with qualified majority and fair procedures seems entirely appropriate given the threat to social cohesion posed by individuals like Donald Trump.

4 Humble care for children

If one wants to contain hubris, there is no way around fundamentally rethinking the way children are raised. With an aged narcissist like Donald Trump, everything is too late. All that can be done is to isolate him as much as possible. However, as Hannah Arendt pointed out, the distinguishing characteristic of human society is natality. Every life is a new beginning and offers new possibilities. Every child is a new chance to avoid humiliation and the hubris that results from it.

Journalist Katherine Reynolds Lewis describes the situation in which parents find themselves today as one in which authority can no longer be taken for granted. While it may have been possible in the past to demand obedience from one's own children, democratic culture has now become so entrenched that authoritarian education can only be enforced against the self-image of children and young people. Parents and teachers must therefore either work with the subtle methods of rewarding behaviorism—that is, skillfully rewarding their children for good behavior—or take them seriously as democratic subjects and involve them in decision-making processes from an early age.

Alfie Kohn tends toward the second. He describes the possibility of a parent-child relationship without manipulation and bribery. This form of humble collaboration between parents and their children is particularly challenging because it requires not

only trust, but responsiveness to developing cognitive abilities and a resistance to educational institutions that are skeptical of children's agency.

The necessary progress for many of these institutions seems to be the transition from punitive to rewarding behaviorism. But this only drives children into the aporia of meritocracy. The resulting transition from the classical to the new authoritarianism of algorithms has already been described. If one does not only want to exchange one narcissism for a new one, there is no way around the arduous democratization of families and schools.

5 Hope

Aaron Bastani goes one step further with the concept of *fully automated luxury communism*, which implies the possibility of overcoming not only the labor society but the entire economic system. In a post-scarcity society, there is no longer any need for means of payment to regulate the distribution of scarce resources. Accordingly, there is no need for unfair advantages. Medicine, too, is likely to be thoroughly automated, which is why the human factor will no longer play a role. And the other fields have been at least partially automated—such as the media through AI text generators and education through virtual learning programs. Competition would probably be limited mainly to matters of coexistence (politics, law, religion, science) and expression (sports, art). It is not that these areas cannot be automated, it just seems from today's perspective that people would still want to keep one or the other arena open to prove themselves. But it is also just as possible that with the end of the working society, narcissism (and with it the need for competition) will be overcome altogether.

What the post-scarcity society means above all is hope. From today's perspective, it tells us that the world does not have to end and that we can certainly expect more from it. It brings to mind the visions of the solar punk movement, in which futuristic cities are crisscrossed by sprawling forests. But it also gives us hope for the future. In it, each person may have the hope of being seen in their needs and challenged in their abilities.

The prerequisite for the post-scarcity society, however, remains that people do not extinguish themselves beforehand and that political majorities emerge for the needs-oriented distribution of resources. The way there will therefore demand everything from us.

6 Psychopaths in the post-scarcity society

However, the problem that even the end of the work society cannot solve is the continued existence of psychopaths. Psychopaths, even those with personality disorder and severe punishments on the (non-existent) conscience have human and civil rights.

Thus, a kind of genocide of people with genetic predisposition can be categorically excluded from the outset. The same applies to the death penalty for individual serious crimes. However, preventive detention is just as much torture. On the contrary, there are opposing considerations as to whether one should not assume diminished culpability in the case of psychopathy. The argumentation does not seem convincing because people with psychopathic personality disorder do have a cognitive understanding of right and wrong. However, it is at least necessary to have the debate.

Some form of incarceration will be unavoidable in some extreme cases. However, under conditions of postal scarcity, possibilities of electronic surveillance—i.e., mobile incarceration—could be considered here, by means of ankle bracelets. This seems to be an area that needs technical solutions.

Furthermore, since even early intervention in parenting could only prevent sociopathy and not psychopathy, there are considerations of genetic intervention. This seems ethically highly questionable from today's perspective, but if a clear positive calculus of such interventions emerges from technological advances, such approaches might be viewed much more favorably by future ethicists.

7 Pull the tapeworm out of your ass

In the short term, however, we can at least be clear about one thing: The psychopaths, narcissists, Machiavellians, sadists, and authoritarian characters are not just out there. We ourselves help ourselves far too often to society's repertoire of practices of hubris. Be it the ill-considered purchase, the conversation with a friend in which we only talk about ourselves, the cleverly planned career in which competitors have to be outmaneuvered, or the joy of humiliating someone on Twitter.

It is therefore also a matter of individual responsibility to be aware of the practices of violence and obfuscation that are the waters in which we swim. Even those who always behave humbly and practice ascetic philanthropy remain part of the systems of structural violence that constitute our society. Quoting Hannah Arendt, Omri Boehm reminds us that no human being has the right to obey. Likewise, one could say that no one has a right to hubris—and may it consist in short-sighted omission. But I am moralizing. We are *all in* glass houses.

So, let us leave structural violence aside for a moment. The active use of practices of hubris is not only a moral problem, but also a practical one. They disintegrate the social fabric on which we depend. Bruno Latour and his fellow proponents of actor-network theory have quite aptly described human beings as a network. We are not just a body with a consciousness, we are also the things we use and the stories we tell ourselves, the people who work with us, motivate us, keep us from doing stupid things, and evaluate us. If we lose any of that, we lose a piece of ourselves. Anyone who has ever

lost a circle of friends or a family knows what that means. The practices of hubris are social diseases that cripple us over time.

If we are not ethical geniuses, we must seek help. This can be individual therapy, open therapy group or social space-oriented intervention. Humility must be practiced. Just as we do not have the right to obey, we also have the duty to fight our metaphorical tapeworms. We must actively choose each day to avoid practices of hubris.

The sociologization of the dark tetrad provides us with a heuristic for moving away from crude, moralizing talk of „evil" and yet analyzing what is genuinely dark in society. The practices of hubris are the foundation of Martin Luther King's *three evils* (exclusion and vilification, inequality and exploitation, and violence and authoritarianism), which gives them a relative stability.

Now, how does the realization that society is saturated with hubris help us? Well, on the one hand, it is a *real* in the Lacanian sense, which must be recognized. Psychopathy, in particular, seems to have an irreducible biological core in some people, so humanity will always have to deal with it. On the other hand, the syndromes can be contained by political reform. In particular, narcissism and sociopathy seem to be combatable through progressive (authoritative) parenting and the prevention of child abuse. Reforming the justice system toward more *restorative justice* may also have a positive impact here. The same applies to sadism, which can also be channeled by allowing its hedonistic expression in controlled environments. Finally, Machiavellianism may no longer be ideologically legitimized. The easier its concealment, the more problematic its consequences.

Hubris is part of human nature, but we do not also need to maintain a society that demands, encourages, and rewards it. Instead, we can try to contain it wherever possible. This is the only way to preserve the cohesion of society in the long term.

Chat log #3 continued

11/16/23

11:45 pm KB

Interesting. Did you feed our chat logs into the AI?

11:57 pm HL

Yeah, I hope you don't mind. I also went into some rabbit holes with the AI.

12:01 pm KB

Nah.

I kind of like the idea of treating people inverse to their success. Why aren't we doing that anymore?

12:05 pm HL

Spirit of capitalism-shit.

12:06 pm KB

Probably. The thing about abundance and automation sounds fun as well. But I guess I'm too cynic for that stuff. Are we stuck with ostracisms against everyone who seems to threaten democracy? That doesn't seem to go along well with Beauvoir's ethics, don't you think?

12:11 pm HL

What I primarily took from the text was how the AI described all of the syndromes as being forms of hubris. The opposite of humility.

12:14 pm KB

I don't know. I thought that was stupid. Sounds like some kind of slave morality thing. Let's all be really humble and meek. Let's lie on our backs and let the predators and masters do what they want.

12:20 pm HL

Okay, your turn: How can we understand humility as something other than slave morality?

12:21 pm KB

But is that even something anyone would want for themselves?

12:22 pm HL

I don't know. Only if it's possible to not make us into collaborators of our own demise.

12:23 pm KB

Maybe that's the point to start.

11/25/23

9:12 pm KB

* File „humility.docx" sent.*

11/28/23

3:55 am KB

What do you think?

11/30/23

2:01 am KB

So you're not going to answer, huh?

5:27 am KB

Fuck off then.

Chat log #3 ends.

Chat log #4

11/16/23

12:25 pm KB

So, what do you know about humility?

12:26 pm RK

More than you, haha.

12:27 pm KB

Okay, whatever, let's start over. What about collaboration?

12:29 pm RK

You mean like French people or what?

12:30 pm KB

Okay, makes sense. I had thought of working together.

12:34 pm RK

Don't ask a history major then.

What do you want to collaborate on?

12:35 pm KB

Just trying to figure out a prompt. :P

12:36 pm RK

So you finally decided to have fartAI write your papers as well? Guess I'm the last one trying to filter stuff through my head.

12:37 pm KB

It's not like that. I'm doing a special project which I actually don't have the time for.

12:40 pm RK

So, you're a nerd, but a lazy nerd?

12:41 pm KB

Get lost. :P

1:55 pm LP

Hey guys, what's up?

1:57 pm RK

Idk. Kate has a project. And she wants to AI it.

1:58 pm LP

Okay, I'll keep lurking while I endure afternoon classes.

5:03 pm KB

Soooo, you guys… tell me about collaborators. I don't like the AI's answer.

5:10 pm RK

Look who's crawling back.

5:11 pm KB

Sorryyyyyy :P

5:17 pm RK

Okay, so the word is used for the Vichy regime after a speech of Petain where he told the French to work with the Germans.

5:18 pm KB

Duh, I can read Wikipedia. But how is this usage of the word related to humility.

5:20 pm RK

Hmm, well, collaboration was considered a kind of national humiliation.

5:21 pm LP

Plus collaborators (especially women, of course) were prosecuted after the war. Like, they shaved women's heads who were said to have had a relationship with nazis.

5:23 pm KB

That's quite a negative use of humility.

5:25 pm RK

Of course, collaboration was degrading.

I mean, the origin of humility is humus. It means being close to the ground.

5:28 pm LP

Oh, etymology. Two can play that game. The German word for humility is demut which means the courage to serve (dienen+Mut).

5:30 pm RK

Seems like the Germans like being humiliated more than us. That explains a lot of their porn.

5:33 pm KB

I wouldn't know about that. :P

5:34 pm LP

It's interesting though to think that humility requires courage. Like, it doesn't come easy. It's something that's frightening to people.

5:35 pm RK

To be humiliated or to serve?

5:39 pm KB

Both. But I was thinking of the second meaning. I mean, you can be afraid of being humiliated, but you can't control whether someone else will humiliate you. But you're choosing to serve someone.

5:41 pm LP

I'm sorry, but that's a very billionaire's daughter thing to say. For most people it's not a choice whether they put themselves in the service of someone else. People need to eat, they need to live.

5:49 pm KB

Okay, I'm just going to take that L.

Maybe that's why humility is called slave morality, because the term is used to tell the serfs that being humble and just accepting their place is the moral thing to do.

5:50 pm LP

You got it.

5:53 pm KB

So humility is only a virtue if you have a choice. The humble person has not been humiliated, but has humbled themself. Ethics for the affluent.

6:00 pm RK

Do you know Heinz von Foerster's ethics? He distinguishes between choices and decisions. You can choose between two options you have, like having salad or gummy bears for dinner. But rationally there is no decision, because one is better in a way you can calculate. You only make a decision in moments when there is no way to rationally choose. Like, do I marry this person? Do I endanger my employment to support a worthy cause? Maybe humility is a decision. It requires you to take a leap of faith.

I don't know. I'm just spit balling.

6:05 pm KB

Thanks, Ruth. :)

So, in that kind of ethics, humbleness is only for the people who already have the freedom to make decisions. For the despondent masses there is actually no choice.

6:06 pm RK

Well there is the decision of resistance versus collaboration. In the face of power, of being governed, we can always choose to resist, but it comes with a price. If we fail, we will be punished with certainty and our success will bring dubious benefits—like the revolution eating it's children and stuff. On the other hand, collaboration brings only more serfdom.

6:07 pm KB

In that sense there is always a choice.

6:10 pm RK

If you told a Holocaust survivor that they always had a choice, they would rightly sucker punch you though. Having to decide between certain death and some aim should not be considered a decision.

6:13 pm KB

Oh, you're right.

6:13 pm LP

Saying that humility is for the people who are able to make decisions reminds me of Musa al-Gharbi's claim that anti-racism can only be in the form of not looking out for the best individual decision for yourself. Asceticism is the only kind of anti-racism that can really make a change.

6:15 pm RK

Now that's quite a claim. What about anti-discrimination legislation or reparations?

6:21 pm LP

The second one is a form of ascetic anti-racism. The first case is more interesting because al-Gharbi shows that people will always find ways to purse their egotistical interests. In a population that is only looking out for themselves and their offspring, even anti-discrimination legislation can only have a limited effect, because people will fight tooth and nail against it.

6:24 pm RK

Ok, I still have two issues: 1. The legislation still has some effect, because even if they fight it in the courts, they can't always win. 2. The argument kind of naturalizes racism. Like, it says that racism comes from people pursuing their interests.

6:28 pm LP

Yes, al-Gharbi would say that it has some effect, but also side effects. Even if it makes firing someone harder, it will also be fodder for right-wing media. And to your second point: Saying that racism has nothing to do with interests seems absurd. It's an ideology that people use to mask their selfishness and sadism.

6:30 pm KB

Back to Narcissism.

6:31 pm RK

Huh, who talked about Narcissism?

6:33 pm KB

Oh, I'm talking to this guy.

6:34 pm RK

About Narcissism? :D

6:34 pm LP

Ooh, a guy?

6:37 pm KB

It's weird. You know how I'm not talking to my sperm donor, right?

6:37 pm LP

Sure.

6:45 pm KB (transcribed audio)

Okay, this guy works for him somehow. But not... really FOR him, you know. He's supposed to keep contact with me, so the old man can feel like he's still in control, but the way we talk... I don't know he's supposed to be some kind of therapist... I know that sounds weird, like he's supposed to make me into what's expected of me. But we've been talking about stuff I'm interested in and he knows a lot about philosophy I guess. And we've been talking about how my d... the old man is a narcissist and he hates him more than I do, I think. So, we're working on this theory of how... I don't know maybe it's a theory of billionaire psychology or something.

6:51 pm RK

What the fuck?

6:53 pm LP

That sounds like some weird reverse psychology conversion therapy stuff. Creepy.

6:55 pm RK

Is he going to be your sugar daddy or something?

6:56 pm KB

Gross. No, what the hell?

We just talked. Nerded out on philosophy or something.

6:59 pm LP

You do you. :D

So now you need to find out about humility for your kinky sugar daddy?

7:00 pm KB

I'm going to come over and kick your ass.

7:01 pm LP

Nooo, I'm just joking. I'm sorry. I'll be good.

7:01 pm RK

Fight, fight, fight! :D

7:02 pm KB

I'll fight both of you.

7:03 pm LP

My place. Bring wine.

11/17/23

10:40 am LP

I'm dying.

10:41 am KB

You think you're struggling? I had class at 8.

10:49 am RK

Sucks to be you. I'm still in bed.

10:59 am KB

I. Will. Fight. You. Again.

11:05 am LP

Bring wine.

11:06 pm KB

Okay :D

11/18/23

1:56 pm LP

How is your little project going?

2:01 pm KB

You're asking me that after two nights of drinking with you guys? :P

Actually I put our discussion into fartAI and asked it to expand on it. ;)

File "humility.docx" sent.

Chat log #4 tbc.

humility.docx

1 Humility as slave morality

Humility is slave morality—this is roughly how one can summarize the position of the philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche on the subject of this text. And he is right in a certain sense: The Christian doctrine that one should also turn the other cheek sounds very righteous, but it enables the exploitation of the masses by the elites. On the other hand, it has been shown that the apparent alternative of affirming the will to power has not advanced humanity either. May Nietzsche also have seen the death of God as a tragedy, his readers (or not-so-accurate readers and end-users of the seepage of the distortions of his ideas into the collective consciousness) have all too often seen the superman as his own calling. For this, one need not even look to the appropriation of his thought by the Nazis. Values have been reevaluated everywhere, and the abandonment of slave morality is part of the heritage of late modernity. Humility, with its religiously sanctimonious overtones, seems less forgivable today than hubris, which many—not least economists—consider a *human condition*.

The diffusion of the will to power to large segments of the population has by no means led to the widespread enjoyment of individual positive freedom . Rather, late modernity is stuck in the aporia of meritocracy: Achievement is the primary principle of acquiring recognition, but at the same time, for more and more people, there is no possibility of achieving anything socially relevant. The gap between the expectation of recognition and its reality leads to cascades of humiliation, which encourage individual and collective expressions of violence.

The decay of late modernity has been significantly accelerated by the unbridled hubris and egoism of billionaires and their *enablers*. It is they who, with their business decisions and political influence, have set the course for a society that produced climate change in the first place and is now helplessly and hesitantly facing it.

It must be recognized that the continued existence of humanity as a civilization is also in the interest of the elites and that social cohesion must be strengthened for this purpose, which is achieved above all through distributive justice, which can only be achieved if elites partially renounce their privileges.

2 Discourses of humility

Hardly surprisingly, the concept of humility can be found in philosophical and religious writings since antiquity. The variety of discourses cannot be done justice here. Let us therefore limit ourselves to a few remarks that pave the way for an unfolding of the term in the sense meant here. The German concept of *Demut* goes back etymologically to the

combination of „to serve" and „courage." It thus describes the courage to serve or the willingness to serve. In English, one speaks of *humility*, which comes from humus, i.e., the soil. Thus, one who is *humble* feels or behaves „lowly." Variations of the Latin *humilitas* are also found in some other European languages. In Greek mythology, *tapeinophrosýnē* (humility or modesty) was associated with the goddess Aidos, who used humility, shame, and shyness to urge people to act properly. Plato paired Aidos for this task with Dike, the goddess of justice.

In Christian writings, humility is often described as humbling oneself before God, as an awareness of one's own imperfection and unworthiness in the face of the Creator. However, as philosopher Fung Yu-Lan points out, the relationship with a personified God is always analogous to interpersonal relationships: it allows for negotiation, petition, and prayer—and the declaration of divine death. He contrasts this „moral" with the „supermoral" relationship we have with the totality of the universe as the totality of all that exists. Contemplation of the universe, of which we are a part and in which we are connected with everything else, allows us to understand humility also as self-relation.

Modern psychology has paid particular attention to the spiritual dimension of the term. Humility is described as a character trait that is the opposite of narcissistic pride. It is formulated as a requirement to lose oneself before the transcendent and to deny oneself, for the sake of the neighbor. These aspects are taken up by psychologist June Tangney and processed into a multi-layered construct. According to this, humility means an accurate assessment of one's own qualities, the ability to recognize limits and to be able to forget one's own ego. This results in an openness to new and contradictory ideas, a realistic assessment of one's place in the world, and an appreciation of all other people and things.

As philosopher Robert Elliot points out, Christian philosopher Josef Pieper and Nietzsche agree that the conception of humility as self-humiliation is mistaken. With Thomas Aquinas, such humility should rather be called irony because it aims to misdirect the other person. True humility, on the other hand, goes hand in hand with magnanimity: it is about admitting one's own mistakes and not being afraid to speak the truth. Only from such an attitude can the mistakes of the other person be seen as such and not be held against him forever. Humility is thus also opposed to pettiness.

Thus, Nietzsche describes the well-understood humility in his preparatory notes to Antichrist quite positively:

> *„The exemplary life consists in love and humility; in fullness of heart which does not exclude even the lowliest, in faith in blessedness here, on earth, in spite of hardship, opposition and death, in conciliation, in the absence of anger, of contempt."*

Basically, we can already span the meaning of the term with this. In the Judeo-Christian tradition, we find above all the subordination to God's (and analogously also this world's) authority, which Nietzsche criticized. From Greek virtue ethics, on the other hand, we

get the meaning of self-moderation, which is a prerequisite for using one's other qualities realistically and thus effectively. The German term, on the other hand, goes well with Kant's ethics of duty, which sees submission to universal norms as the highest expression of ethical behavior. And humility, after all, is also a spiritual, supermoral category that arises from viewing the self as a wondrous and small aspect of the universe.

Where this text positions itself in terms of the scope of meaning will hopefully become clear in the unfolding of the argument. It should be obvious, however, that a viable concept of humility must start not from a position of weakness but of strength, of agency. Humility does not result from humiliation, as the Christian concept assumes. This can instead lead to an offended hubris. After all, it was the human being who felt humiliated by the Christian slave morality who killed God. One can act humbly only if one has the possibility not to do so. It does not mean to make oneself small, but to consciously deal with one's own strength.

As will be developed in the following chapters, humility means using one's own agency to promote the interests of others. In this respect, it means recognizing that the pursuit of one's own short-term interests leads to socially and thus also individually disadvantageous results. Humility is a rational virtue (also in the sense of calculating benefits).

3 Humble Collaboration

Our understanding of the meaning of humility can hopefully be deepened via a small detour. The concept of collaboration seems to me to be helpful here. In the following, it will be conceptualized in such a way that it becomes understandable to what extent humble action is only meaningful when it comes from the rulers. For the ruled, collaboration is banal everyday life.

In a 2022 interview, the historian Rossoliński-Liebe explained how Stepan Bandera helped prepare the Nazi invasion of Ukraine, only to be sent to a concentration camp by the Nazis because his plans for the establishment of a fascist Ukrainian state clashed with Nazi-German plans for the colonization of Eastern Europe. The Bandera case thus seems paradigmatic of the phenomenon of collaboration. It is Rossoliński-Liebe, then, who in a recent programmatic article attempts to establish the field of collaboration studies as an independent subfield of World War II research. While historians like to locate collaboration in this era (which admittedly gave rise to the concept), it seems to me that the phenomenon plays a central role in human coexistence as a whole—even today.

The journalist and migration researcher Mark Terkessidis has already presented an attempt to productively turn the concept around with the monograph *Kollaboration,* in

order to advance his half-theoretical, half-activist program of interculture or multiplicity. This contribution, however, sacrifices the enormously stirring connotations that the term has in many European languages due to the Nazi occupation in order to be able to turn it positively. Thus, the distinction between cooperation and collaboration disappears far too quickly. Constantly keeping in mind the dark side of the term, however, is a prerequisite for its fruitful use.

The concept of collaboration

Historical horizon of meaning

While the term in its original Latin form described collaboration in a rather neutral way and this neutrality has been preserved, for example, in the English *collaboration,* the meaning of cooperating with an occupying power has become established in many European languages following a speech by the Vichy dictator Pétain. In order to do justice to this linguistic fact, Rossoliński-Liebes remarks on practices of collaboration during World War II will be discussed first.

He first distinguishes „cooperation" as „a collaboration between equal partners" from „collaboration" as „an asymmetrical relationship between unequal actors brought about under specific conditions of occupation." Although it has been used as a political term of struggle, its use in this sense continues to be common in historical scholarship. In addition, the term had been specified by a 19th century political discourse „about the violation of „national loyalty." In the context of nationalism, betraying one's „own nation" was a particularly despicable sin. So why did nationalist forces in particular collaborate? The French strategy should be understood as an attempt to protect their own culture and economy from German interference. However, there was a range of collaboration practices. In Eastern Europe, it was not the political allies of the occupiers who were considered collaborators, but the economic profiteers and anyone who did not resist.

While Rossoliński-Liebe clearly distinguishes collaboration from cooperation, he on the other hand problematizes the demarcation from the counter-concept of resistance. A demarcation between good and evil, he argues, is not so easily possible, since everyone had to collaborate from time to time. Thus, he points out several cases of actors who on the one hand resisted, but on the other hand also followed the same goals or provided support. The „Hague Land Warfare Conventions of 1907" had already taken into account the difficulty of this distinction between collaboration and necessary or ordinary coexistence with the occupying forces and did not punish simple cooperation with an occupying force. Even collaboration in the administration was considered necessary by governments-in-exile to maintain public life.

An attempt to capture the variations of collaborating can be found, according to Rossoliński-Liebe, in Werner Rings' *Life with the Enemy*. Rings distinguishes the *neutral collaborator*, who collaborates with the occupiers without adopting the ideology (i.e., in

this case, National Socialism), from *unconditional, conditional*, and *tactical* collaborators. The *unconditional collaborator* has the same ideology as the occupier and therefore collaborates out of conviction. The *conditional collaborators* are an intermediate type. They share some of the views of the occupier. For example, there were many people in Eastern Europe who shared anti-Semitism with the Germans and therefore assisted in the deportation and extermination of the Jewish population. At this point, however, their common interests with the Nazis ended. *Tactical* collaborators, on the other hand, used the appearance of collaboration to organize resistance, for example by helping Jews to escape. The unambiguity thus gained, however, is probably more of a deception. The demarcation between resistance and collaboration cannot always be made unambiguously, even from today's perspective.

The Uncritical Collaboration Discourse and Resulting Need for Clarification

The fact that a historically informed concept of collaboration has so far been little used in the social sciences is due to the dominance of an Anglo-American discourse on collaboration, which draws the line between collaboration and cooperation in a completely different way. Here, collaboration is a process in which actors come together to work on a common project, while cooperation means helping each other with their own projects. Collaboration is thus only an intensification of cooperation. It is simply working more closely together so that there is a need for greater alignment of goals among all participants. This concept does not take into account power asymmetries. This distinction is thus purely descriptive and has no critical connectivity.

This use of collaboration seems to me to blur the distinction between three processes: cooperation, collaboration, and negotiation (a form of contained conflict, that is). When several actors work on a common project, they either have a keen sense of trust and common goals, or some actors subordinate themselves to another, or they have to regularly address their conflicting goals and find compromises.

The concept of cooperation in this discourse, on the other hand, seems to me to mean something more like mutual help and exchange. However, it profitably points out that even in the primitive communism of a nuclear family, each actor still has his own personal interests. The notion of family structure, as opposed to family culture, points to the fact that even in communities, however close, each actor occupies his own niche, which influences his participation in common projects. Thus, in the end, one can only speak of cooperation when everyone pursues his or her own goals and when people help each other. As soon as a joint project is started, we are dealing with collaboration or negotiation.

The Anglo-American discourse is much more common in the social sciences than the historical one and plays a significant role in (post-industrial) sociological research on labor. Why do I now insist on overloading the concept of collaboration with power considerations? It would also be possible to choose a different term. For example, one could speak of subjugation, adaptation, participation, or assimilation. That should lead to less confusion, shouldn't it? But none of these terms seems to me to adequately reflect what the concept of collaboration means.

Submission meets the aspect of non-resistance against domination, but not that of working together including the adaptation of one's own goals to those of the rulers. However, it is also not only the adaptation that is important, but the working towards these goals. Whereas submission implies a single act after which one is only a servant, collaboration is an ongoing process involving ever-changing choices to continue and resist.

The term participation, which means taking part in a collective action, has too positive connotations. It describes empowered participation, which is a form of negotiation made possible by the renunciation of power by those in power. It can also be understood as co-determination.

The relationship to assimilation is even more complex. Assimilation means adaptation to a social mainstream. On the one hand, the rulers naturally have a culturally hegemonic position in this mainstream. On the other hand, only in a few societies do they specify all cultural goals. Moreover, the goals proclaimed in the mass media and educational institutions are not identical with the agenda of political and economic elites. Assimilation means following the cultural goals of society, collaboration, supporting the goal achievement of the rulers. In addition, assimilation is referred exclusively to minorities who conform to the mainstream. Collaborators, on the other hand, tend to be in the majority vis-à-vis the rulers, to whose interests they adapt their actions.

The term collaboration does not seem to be replaceable at this point. One could adjectivally distinguish between submissive and negotiating collaboration in order to allow the unproblematic case of collaboration to be more equivalent. However, this seems to me contradictory, because negotiation is precisely a productive form of conflict and not of collaboration.

Attempt at positive appropriation of the term

Following the uncritical notion of collaboration, Terkessidis defines „collaboration as an ethical […] guiding idea [… that] opens up a space for art that can enable processes of cognition and negotiation about affective contexts and indeterminate sensibilities".

He, too, initially distinguishes collaboration from cooperation:

In collaboration, different actors come together, work together, and dissolve back into intact units after the joint activity. Collaboration, on the other hand, means cooperation in which the actors realize that they themselves are being changed in the process and even welcome this change.

This demarcation is at odds with Rossoliński-Liebe's distinction. It does not refer to the asymmetry, but to the potential for change in collaboration. Unfortunately, it cannot be deduced from the context of this passage why people should not be able to change in the case of cooperation, whereas this is the case in the case of collaboration. In terms of enriching the concept, one could nevertheless consider how this potential for change might arise from the asymmetry of the relationship. To do this, however, we must first explore the relationship between symmetrical and asymmetrical modes of interaction.

Generalization of the interaction mode collaboration

Cooperation: In a cooperation, two or more actors of the same status come together to achieve a common goal. There is therefore already a broad consensus on values. The actors can only be sure of this consensus if they have already worked together in the past and have assured themselves of its existence. There is thus something between the actors that can be described as confidence (*Zutrauen*): a mutual knowledge that one can take risks toward the other because advances of trust (*Vertrauen*) have been rewarded in the past. Resources are shared in this relationship according to a principle that anthropologist David Graeber calls *primal communism:* One shares with each other according to the needs of the other person and according to one's own ability to give—without speculating that future benefits will result, but out of natural altruism. However, this primal communism can only be practiced in relatively small communities because it is based on confidence established through repeated (face-to-face) interactions.

Contract: Outside of communities, cooperation is based on contracts according to many theories (such as institutionalism). These are just as symmetrical as cooperation (in private law, both contracting parties are equal legal subjects), but are not guaranteed by confidence, but by institutions such as a functioning rule of law, which ensures that contracts are enforced. A consensus on values is not necessary because the law is enforced regardless of the consent of individual contracting parties. Here, the exchange of resources works according to the principle of exchange of equivalents: In the contract, it is precisely agreed who receives which service for which consideration. However, contracts also have their limits. On the one hand, in the problem of colonization of the lifeworld, when the abridgement of the communication of the contract and the payment of money leads to the degeneration of interpersonal relationships (when, for example, children are controlled by their parents through monetary payments). On the other hand, there is also the problem of the non-contractual components of the contract: A minimum consensus in the sense of, e.g., a

view-keeping to the rule of law is necessary because simply not every aspect of a transaction can be recorded in a contract.

Conflict: A third type of symmetric interaction is conflict. Cultural differences between communities or competition for resources can make peaceful coexistence impossible. Conflict then arises between the two parties, which in turn can be contained by external institutions, such as the rule of law, and thus turned productive. The clash of interests or values may be mediated into a compromise that neither party is fully satisfied with, but which is accepted because of the prohibitive costs of open conflict. In particularly fortunate cases, the conflict is contained enough to take the form of a negotiation. Then, according to generally accepted rules, the best solution or a common horizon of meaning is sought. This happens, for example, when a conflict between doctors and nurses in an operating room is resolved by reference to a checklist. As the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine has shown, this assumption of shared rationality is not always justified and there are hardly any effective international effective international institutions that could contain conflicts.

Domination—collaboration—resistance: In contrast to these three modes of interaction, collaboration can be described as asymmetrical interaction. This means that it is always a figuration of actors between whom there is an imbalance of power. Thus, one cannot speak of collaboration partners, but only of collaborators and occupiers—or maybe the established, colonists or profiteers. To keep it as general as possible, one should probably speak of the rulers. In this juxtaposition, it is striking that there is not only a dyad, but at least a triad of rulers, collaborators, and resisters. Collaboration and resistance can hardly be separated, as Rossoliński-Liebe already emphasized: collaboration exists only against the background of the possibility of resistance, and both modes are often intertwined. And both, in turn, are only reactions to domination.

Whether someone collaborates or resists depends on whether that person trusts or distrusts the rulers. Although these two concepts seem to be polar opposites, they are quite different types of situational perceptions. Distrust is the opposite concept to confidence: repeated disappointments lead to a rational knowledge that collaboration would be detrimental. Confidence, on the other hand, is what must be activated when not enough information is available to assess the likelihood of success of an action. In other words, hazards cannot be converted into risks. If one does not know with which (approximate) probabilities a positive or negative outcome will occur, then the only option is to *leap into the belief* that everything will already work out fine.

Those who collaborate expose themselves to the risk that the rulers will still not reward their own actions. It is a bet in which one does not know the chances of winning. At the same time, collaborating is always an attempt to establish a relationship with the rulers that makes their actions predictable—that is, an attempt to shift into the interaction mode of cooperation or contract. In this respect, collaboration is always a gift in the

sense of Marcel Mauss' classical gift theory : one gives something to the rulers in the hope that they will eventually reward or at least not punish one. But one has no indication that this behavior will work. If a gift succeeds, it establishes a relationship of mutual obligation. But if it is rejected or not recognized as a gift, then nothing is gained.

The resistance antagonizes and can lead to punishment. In return, however, it is less uncertain. One can at least be sure that one will be punished. And if one is not punished, then this is an indication that it is not resistance at all, but conflict. Then perhaps the rulers are not so superior but can be defeated. The collaborator, on the other hand, can never win; he can only hope to be absorbed into the group of rulers.

The complete uncertainty (one does not even know whether one is doing the right thing in order to get closer to one's goal) and the sole orientation to the goals of action of the rulers leads quite classically to alienation, to the loss of identity, to dissolution. From the perspective of the resisters, the collaborators are guided by a false consciousness or are strategic traitors.

Collaborators are hypocrites (they publicly represent goals/values that are not their own) or follow a double standard (they lead other members of their group to a fate that they assume is inappropriate for them). Often, collaborating requires emotion work to avoid showing the rulers that one is suffering. Psychologically, then, it is associated with cognitive dissonance, which leads to dissociation, neurosis, and psychosis. One can only remain true to oneself and one's in-group in the mode of resistance.

If we transfer the discussed modes of interaction to social space, it seems plausible at first glance that symmetrical ones can also be called horizontal and asymmetrical ones vertical modes of interaction. Cooperation, conflict, and contract imply an equivalence of actors, while domination, collaboration, and resistance suggest actors with different statuses.

In the case of the contract, the situation is somewhat more complicated: The richest and the poorest person can enter into a contract, and this is guaranteed (according to the claim) by the rule of law. Contracts are at odds with the distinction between horizontal and vertical modes of interaction because they are institutionally secured.

At the same time, however, economic capital becomes irrelevant for the economic field above a certain amount and is transformed into quasi pure power: Nobody needs 1,000 Maseratis, but with a billion euros some rules of the rule of law can be undermined („*a fine is a price*"). This suggests that the equalizing effect of contracts is limited to status differences with a maximum spread. Above a certain difference in social position, interactions are in fact always collaborations.

The concept of the non-contractual elements of the contract also points to the necessity of cooperation or collaboration for the formation and existence of a contract. And since in most cases there is no confidence between parties entering into a contract,

collaboration—that is, gift and trust—plays the greater role. To turn trust into confidence, there are, of course, rituals in various cultures that aim at mutual obligation or extortion to secure the contract. If this does not succeed, the lower-status contracting party in particular must resign itself to the role of collaborator during the uncertain phase of contract formation.

Collaboration, however, plays a role not only in securing contracts. The concept seems much more important for describing the collective behavior that enables the intensification of wealth inequality and the destruction of the foundations of human survival on Earth. The population that bears the psychopathic climate policies of their rulers (in politics, economy, etc.) makes itself co-responsible as a collective of collaborators and enablers.

Explanation of the term collaboration

Collaborators as Enablers of the Rulers

In the self-help literature on dealing with narcissistic relatives, there is the term enabler. This refers to the people who make it possible for narcissists to succeed with their destructive behavior. They rationalize or defend the behavior and urge the (other) victims of the narcissistic personality to follow suit so that it does not escalate. In their codependency, they can display almost as bad behavior as the actual perpetrators.

If one understands collaborators as enablers who make rule possible in the first place, their moral complicity in the excesses of a ruling class becomes obvious. It is they who sustain the prevailing order. Structurally, the ruling classes are never so numerous that they could maintain them without collaborators.

Nationalistic connotations

As Rossoliński-Liebe points out, the discourse on collaborators has nationalist undertones: a collaborator is someone who betrays his country, „his people". Anyone who only supports the rulers would then first of all be a fellow traveler. By using the term, one would thus expose oneself as a nationalist. However, these nationalist connotations seem to me to be aimed less at betrayal of the nation itself than at betrayal of the people toward whom one would have to show solidarity and, further, against one's own material, not necessarily subjective, interests. A collaborator betrays himself on a certain level.

Accomplice and victim

If one compares the case of Stepan Bandera with Primo Levi's and Jean Améry's descriptions of their experiences in the concentration and extermination camp Auschwitz-Monowitz, the unpleasant suspicion arises that we are dealing here with two poles of a collaboration continuum. On the one hand, the strategies to be found in it are opposing: while Bandera hoped that collaboration with Nazi Germany would present

him with a Nazi Ukraine on a silver platter, the inmates at Auschwitz-Monowitz hoped alone to survive long enough to witness the liberation of the camp or to be saved by some other miracle. Bandera voluntarily placed himself in a situation where he was at the mercy of the Germans because he expected to gain an advantage. The concentration camp inmates, on the other hand, were forced into their fate.

On the other hand, both social characters—murderers and victims—are united by the hope (i.e., irrational trust) that their own interests will be taken care of in case of collaboration. Améry describes how surprisingly few inmates voluntarily touched the electrified fence to kill themselves. Instead, survivors describe the number of amoral acts that many in the concentration camp engaged in to delay their own deaths. It was a desperate hope, but a hope nonetheless. Thus, every collaborator makes himself an accomplice of the rulers—which is why many Holocaust survivors struggled with severe feelings of guilt because they survived and others did not.

Nevertheless, it is forbidden to understand the role of the victim as a kind of collaboration. The reason for this is not only that it would lead to a perpetrator-victim reversal, which the Nazis would be extremely happy to use to rewrite history. It would also blur the concept of collaboration, because the free decision to collaborate is an important aspect of the concept.

Asymmetry and transformation

Let us return to Terkessidis' claim that cooperation leaves the participants unchanged, while collaboration necessarily leads to a transformation of the participants. The illustration of the collaboration triad makes it clear that Terkessidis has a point here: Those who collaborate cannot unreservedly follow their own goals, but must align them with the goals of those in power. Thus, the lack of a consensus on values must be denied, at least to the rulers. The conflict of values is not settled, but concealed. One can think here of the concept of *inner emigration*, which fellow travelers of the Nazi regime used after 1945 to claim that they had not actually changed, that they had only put on a mask, which, however, had not changed the core of their self. Behind this is an image of the human being that assumes an authentic core of the personality that remains stable in relation to the changeable external persona.

Social-psychologically, such an argumentation is not convincing. One cannot constantly act in a way that does not correspond to one's own self-image without resolving the cognitive dissonances that arise. Those who collaborate must counteract this through clandestine actions of resistance, rationalization of their own actions („I am powerless"), or dissociation. The topos of „inner emigration" was therefore never particularly convincing outside the group of fellow travelers.

Terkessidis, who wants to turn collaboration as a mode of surrendering agency to the collective or to marginalized actors into a positive, may accordingly be quite right that

those who put themselves in situations that require them to submit to the goals of others change. Even the temporary adoption of goals that are not our own leads to a process of reflection that we can hardly resist. What the outcome of this process will be, however, is quite open. The whole thing should not be reduced to a simplistic idea à la Stockholm Syndrome. While not everyone became a Nazi by collaborating with the Nazis, Terkessidis' idea will also not necessarily lead to temporarily collaborating rulers (here in the sense of the group of the culturally, economically, politically, or otherwise dominant) adopting the perspective of the subalterns. But at least they must do so temporarily. How they change as a result is open, but change is plausible.

Collaboration as a utopian project

At this point, it is worthwhile to trace Terkessidis' argumentation for collaboration. He begins by describing what he sees as the factors that make collaboration possible: late-modern subjects are angry and in search of new ways of living. He then elaborates on what collaboration might mean in a positive sense, using the fields that most concern him: Education, Art, and Criticism. This selection suggests that he has not presented a general theory of collaboration and probably does not intend to do so. His writings are on behalf of his project to make multiplicity livable. What he cannot use for this is a concept that emphasizes the inevitability of moral contamination. This will be discussed in more detail later.

Humble collaboration

So why does he now think people are angry and why can that be productive? He points out that neoliberal late modernity has produced a new kind of poverty that affects most people. This, he says, consists not only in material poverty, but in a lack of agency. This does not only apply to people in material hardship. People from the middle class are also confronted with increasingly precarious life chances, as they have to reckon with slipping into poverty even in the face of small shocks. An excess of negative freedom gives people the feeling of permanently dancing unsecured on the high wire. Instead of wishing for more freedom, one would sometimes wish for more support.

While the anger people feel about this structural overload can freeze them (here Terkessidis quotes the classical philologist Joachim Latacz, who cites the ancient Greek term *menis*: „a persistent, smoldering, embittered indignation because of a grievance suffered: the aftermath of a 'swallowed anger'„), in the context of the openness of the multi-option society (or *Parapolis*, as Terkessidis calls the urban intensification of the same) it can trigger a search for better possibilities. Here the horseshoe of the right and the left bends apart, describing partly similar phenomena but offering opposite proposals for their solution. While the right wants to freeze a myth, the left seeks new ways to achieve progress toward equality and positive freedom. This progress can only

be achieved if all people are included in the noumenal space : When they can demand rational arguments for all restrictions on their positive freedom.

Practically, this expansion of noumenal space can only be achieved through practices that, to avoid confusion, could be called *humble* collaboration (a conceptual distinction that Terkessidis himself does not make). The concept of humble collaboration describes Terkessidis' idea of a voluntary relinquishment of power by the rulers and a submission to the goals of action of the ruled. „Collaboration concretely means being able to surrender control to other collaborators." By contrast, the more common mode of collaboration, in which the dominated conform to the interests of the rulers, seems to me so dominant that a qualifying adjective would almost be euphemistic.

While *menis* is a state of alienation, the humble search for solutions can be described as an action, as an alienating oneself. By this, Terkessidis means that what previously seemed normal is seen as no longer normal. In this process, the boundaries between in-groups and out-groups also become blurred. Because what is known becomes foreign, a new normality must be negotiated for which one must take responsibility oneself. However, the individual assumption of responsibility cannot replace the state. Collaboration should not take the form of deliberative democracy, but rather fill the gaps between the state and the private sphere.

Humble collaboration applications

Learning, to come to Terkessidis' first heartfelt point, is only conceivable as collaboration. If I do not temporarily set aside my own goals and adopt the goals of the teacher, then I cannot expand my horizons. With the end of the disciplinary society, however, the interests of the learners increasingly came into focus. It is no longer legitimate to insist in the classroom alone that learners submit to the teacher. The teacher, too, must at least temporarily adopt the learners' perspective in order to recognize why the learners' adoption of perspective fails. Beyond that, however, authority itself becomes questionable: Why should the teacher always have the correct knowledge? Humility seems increasingly in demand in teaching.

The authority of the artist comes from ideas of genius or expressive expression. It wants to exist only for its own sake. At the same time, funders in foundations and government institutions expect goals beyond that to be achieved, such as education, integration, and so on. The relationship between art (for itself) and culture (for society) is, as philosopher Bazon Brock pointed out in a commentary on *documenta fifteen,* an indicator of the relationship between individualism and collectivism. In 2022, documenta had been curated for the first time by an artists' collective, which invited mainly collectives of artists, who in turn often put social goals before artistic expression in their works. For Brock, this was an indication of the victory of collectivism over individualism. Terkessidis indirectly confirms this interpretation—though he is much

more positive about this development than Brock. He welcomes the fact that „searching, angry, and collaborating individuals" are replacing the „geniuses" of the past.

As a music critic, Terkessidis is also concerned in the concluding chapter to demonstrate the potential for transformation through the cocreation of meaning in the collaboration of art and criticism. Using the example of the project of a critical collection of folk songs from all over the world, he shows how new structures of meaning can emerge in relation to homeland. If one interprets international music as German folk music, then the concept of home must be expanded, he says. He identifies a form of criticism that aims not at deconstructing the work, but at repairing it. Instead of just criticizing racism, new world relations should be created. Through such collaborations, he argues, the Parapolis can become a place of polyphony: a collection, rather than a collective. Terkessidis concludes by noting that collaboration is the nature of human beings to help each other. Through mutual aid, as Kropotkin had demanded, living together without state coercion was possible.

It is precisely in relation to criticism and „mutual aid" that the conceptual imprecision of Terkessidis's philosophical „smorgasbord" is striking. Since he did not introduce the distinction between symmetrical and asymmetrical modes of interaction, he does not notice that he is partly arguing for cooperation here. In practice this may not matter, but for a precise location of collaboration in late modernity it does.

In addition, from a certain point on in the text, only humble collaboration is addressed, thus achieving a moral unambiguity that should trigger unease on the subject of collaboration. A positive feature of poststructural critique is precisely that it is always ready to change the direction of critique with changing power relations. If the working class (to put it quite drastically) establishes its dictatorship, critique must turn against it. Those who rule must always be forced to explain their actions in the sense of the right to justification. Thus, even humble collaboration must be questioned.

The limits of humble collaboration

The structure of humble collaboration will be examined in more detail here. It seems to begin with the decision of the rulers to relinquish power. In fact, however, such a decision is quite unlikely without a previous history. Rationality actually dictates that one's own ability to act be maintained as far as possible. The calculation of power, must have been influenced somehow:

1. The rulers were forced by a history of resistance to intentionally change the balance of power.
2. The balance of power has changed through resistance in such a way that humble collaboration is preferred to conflict in the near future.
3. The rulers (who are the rulers only in figuration, not absolutely) are forced by an

external ruling authority to recognize the interests of the ruled.

4. The rulers actually want the ruled to collaborate, but attempts to force them to do so result in resistance.

However, the decision of the rulers was brought about, it results in a temporary adaptation to the action goals of the ruled. In „Participation in Large Groups," sociologist Nicole J. Saam describes the structural tensions that arise when employees at different levels are to participate equally in change processes in participatory procedures. Two of the four tensions she lists seem particularly interesting here:

1. **Participation in the context of domination**: The actual relations of domination cannot be *temporarily* suspended. Superiors with an authoritarian leadership style will not be able to suppress their claim to be heard as a matter of priority, even in such forums. Conversely, employees will not be able to suppress their fear of repression outside the process if they misbehave. The result is the mere appearance of equality in the process.

2. **Understanding-orientation in the context of purpose-rationality**: These forums have the problem that they are supposed to build consensus, but are conducted under time and resource constraints. Approaching consensus, however, is only possible through an extremely time-consuming process and under the assumption that there are no material differences of interest that stand in the way. Practically, however, no one wants to give up power or resources in the long term.

Sociologically, then, the functioning of humble collaboration is enormously unlikely. It is much more likely that the external appearance of power transfer is temporarily created. As long as it is possible to create this appearance, this again makes the functioning more unlikely.

The transfer of power must therefore be forced. In the mode of industrial action, of course, this can happen. Staff or works councils can have enormous influence in a company. However, this easily creates a functional elite again, which segregates itself through social closure.

Let us assume that the temporary transfer of power has worked and that the goals of the otherwise dominated have been pursued within the framework of a project. As Saam points out, at that moment the inequality structure is re-established and organizational learning is prevented by the power relations that then take hold. In this respect, humble collaboration cannot be temporary; it must be permanent in order to cause change. However, it is then not a humble collaboration, but a revolution.

According to these considerations, humble collaboration seems to be possible only within a limited framework. It is accordingly unsurprising that Terkessidis' examples are limited to education, art, and criticism. Economics and „big politics" are left out. Callon's hybrid forums, however, are certainly spaces where power is ceded temporarily but regularly. They must use these opportunities to convince those in power that their

proposed solutions are also in their interests. The multiplication of hybrid forums can provide ever more spaces for humble collaboration.

Interim summary

Stepan Bandera spent the last years of his life in exile in Munich until he was executed by a KGB agent with a poison dart gun. During those years, he tried to build Ukrainian fascism from afar. Today many western Ukrainians revere him. One man's collaborator is another man's hero and martyr, who did what was necessary and could not have been a fascist because of his stay in a concentration camp.

Is such a person a collaborator or rather a perpetrator? How does his biography fit into the scheme developed here? If one considers collaborators as enablers of the rulers and as traitors to their own properly understood interests, then there seems to be no question that Bandera was a collaborator. Nor can the category be distinguished from that of the perpetrator. Rather, the collaborator is always at the same time a perpetrator: he takes upon himself a guilt by turning against the option of resistance. On the other hand, historical examples show us that resistance and collaboration start from one person and can change in the course of a single day. Few people are collaborators as much as Stepan Bandera.

The generalization of the concept of collaboration removes it from the great breach of civilization. In this version, collaborators do not end up before an international criminal court. It is up to one's conscience whether one wants to be a collaborator. One should only be clear about whether one cooperates because one's own values are represented or whether one collaborates because it is easier.

For those in power, the calculation is the opposite: does one really meet one's own interests if one never aligns oneself with the interests of others?

4 Asceticism

Humility, then, is only a relevant category for the ruled—whether this means being a pres or a mother to her child. They must temporarily subordinate themselves to the ruled, which also means putting their resources at their disposal.

Antiracism

In a controversial article sociologist Musa Al-Gharbi pointed out that segregation and inequality are most severe where people appear to be more liberal, namely in the northeastern states of the United States. Why is that? Well, primarily the well-founded interest of middle- and upper-class parents in giving their children the best life chances.

This is primarily expressed in the fact that these parents want to send their children to the best possible schools and universities. To do so, they are willing to move to neighborhoods or even cities with good schools and use all the resources at their disposal to send their children to elite universities—up to and including major cash donations and attempts at deception. Philosopher Michael Sandel, renowned for his work on justice, confirms this interpretation of Al-Gharbi. He sees attempts to circumvent the mechanisms of meritocracy through monetary payments as an important contributor to inequality.

Al-Gharbi concludes that neither anti-racism training nor policy programs can effectively address racial inequality. Even now, programs to help minorities are being too skillfully booted out to hold out much hope for more of the same. Until the largely white middle and upper classes are willing to set aside their dynastic interests in favor of equality and cohesion, all policies are doomed to fail, he said. Antiracism, he argues, can only take the form of *ascetic antiracism* if it is to lead to material change. He thus opposes performative progressivism, which only ever has the function of concealing the ice-cold pursuit of interests by its representatives. More important, he argues, is that the elites renounce their privileges in the attempt to assert their well-understood but selfish interests.

The „wokeness" discourse

I am deliberately avoiding here the woolly term *wokeness* because it actually describes a progressive agenda. It has been used since the 1930s in *African-American Vernacular English to* describe an awareness of a lack of social justice and racism. Since gaining wider mass media currency in the context of protests against police violence in the United States since 2014, it has been cast as a fighting term by right-wing commentators, to the point that the governor of Florida declared in November 2022, „Florida is where woke goes to die." (Ironically, one of DeSantis' associates correctly defined *woke* in a court filing as „The belief there are systemic injustices in American society and the need to address them.")

However, what is also criticized by leftists, on the other hand, is the self-promotion of conventionally thinking liberals as enlightened personalities, which is used to deflect criticism. It can be summed up in the statement, „You dare call me racist?" This sentiment is found especially among people who do not understand that individual racist behaviors do not make one racist. Only consistent racist behavior makes it necessary to brand someone a „racist." For these conventionalists, „racist" is an insult, not a call to rethink their behavior. Because they consider themselves progressive, they must directly reject the cognitive dissonance of the accusation of racism in order to maintain their fragile self-image. Armin Nassehi speaks of left-liberals as „speaking left" and „living right." Progressiveness is thus found only at the discursive level, not at the

level of everyday practices. Ulrich Brand and Markus Wissen give the vivid example of someone driving an SUV to the organic market.

But where does this judgment actually apply? While right-wing commentators instrumentalize the term to criticize any progressive politics, one should take a closer look at empirical examples of such performances.

Particularly prominent was the *Kente Cloth controversy*, in which Democratic members of Congress had themselves photographed wearing traditional West African scarves to protest police violence. At the same time, they had banned certain violent practices and established a police violence registry. Here, then, is an example that became public because the symbolic obscured the actual politics in the media discourse, but not a pure performance.

Wolfgang Ulrich, on the other hand, shows the pure form of what can be called performative progressiveness in *Wahre Meisterwerte:* Influencers on *Instagram.* He points out that the arbitrariness of values—everything can theoretically be called a value—leads to an inflation of moralizing and *virtue signaling communication.* Diversity and anti-racism are placed on par with wellness and expressed in an artificial persona that is given an elevated level of authenticity through apparent constant observation. If „the lifestyle left" were actually like these influencers, the whole „wokeness" discourse would certainly be appropriate. As the situation stands, however, double standards exist everywhere, and not just since yesterday.

The studies by sociologist Frank Kalter and colleagues also show for Germany that the structural differences between ethnic groups in the labor market can largely be traced back to divergent educational opportunities. Disadvantages for postmigrant children were already evident in elementary school and kindergarten, which would never be compensated for, but only intensified over the course of the educational biography. The tripartite school system is designed to exploit such differences in favor of middle-class children. Sociologist Aladin El-Mafaalani notes in a „Jung und Naiv" interview about his text *Mythos Bildung* that a fundamental reform of the school system toward a single-tier system is completely out of the question in the medium term. The government that attempted this would not only be voted out of office, but would have to reckon with unprecedented protests. This is where the humility of the German bourgeoisie has its definite limit.

But an ascetic antiracism can also show itself in making one's own resources available to migrants. This does not so much mean monetary donations, which are merely an individual assumption of responsibility in the face of state failure. Basic security and emergency aid should never actually have to be provided by private individuals. Much more important, as the research project „Networks of Integration" by sociologist Stefan Bernhard at the Institute for Employment Research in Nuremberg showed, are the support networks of refugees. These only have a positive influence on the success of

refugees' integration if they predominantly contain people who are established in the host society and give more support than they receive. If, as a refugee, I have a network of people who need my help, for example, because they themselves have care needs, then this is of little help to me. If I always have to babysit the children of my „supporters," then I can't concentrate on my education. What is most helpful are people who are in professional life and can provide contacts, but at the same time have time for day-to-day support. So, to put it flatteringly, we are talking about the performance elites or the *professional-managerial class (PMC),* who have absolutely no incentive to actively engage with refugees—and for whom this even represents an extraordinary burden because they have the least of the resource time in particular. Their engagement would be an act of humility because they get absolutely nothing out of the relationship (except interpersonal contact and some pride) and have to invest substantially.

Such an individual assumption of responsibility could also be made by members of the middle classes with regard to their children's school attendance. They can refrain from obtaining an exemption for their child to go to a school in another district where the proportion of foreigners is lower. Even befriending a child whose parents have higher educational attainment than their own can significantly improve their chances of educational success. Whether the (limited) programs of politics to reduce the differences in educational opportunities can succeed thus depends on the willingness of individual parents not to offer their child the best opportunities. As philosopher Michael Sandel also shows, using the example of college access in the United States, selfish parents will still undermine any program.

Sociologist Gary Becker has created what is probably the most cynical term for misanthropy: *taste for discrimination*. It is so unpleasant because it implies that some people simply like to discriminate. As a rational choice theorist, you simply take that into an actor's preference structure and then everything else follows as a consequence of rational action. As Kalter has to admit, there seems to be a *taste for discrimination in* Germany, because part of the labor market performance of first and second generation Turkish and Eastern European immigrants in particular cannot be explained by differences in educational attainment. A field experiment by Leo Kaas and Christian Manger confirmed this finding. Applications for student internships were sent to 528 places, one with a German-sounding name and one with a Turkish-sounding name. Overall, applicants with German-sounding names had a 14 percent higher chance of a callback. The authors interpret this result as evidence of statistical discrimination.

In response to this and similar studies, the Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency conducted a pilot project with anonymized job applications. This practice brought the chance of being hired closer to the average for people with a migration background and women. The positive results led to the introduction of this practice in some companies and state administrations. Again, this example shows that anti-racism is primarily about replacing habitual practices with more progressive ones, which can feel like a loss of

control. This form of humility must be mastered not only by parents, but also by administrators.

The Psychoanalyst as Communicative Ascetic

The essence of psychoanalytic therapy is to open up a space for the patient to narratively explore his or her own actions, thoughts, and dreams. Whatever theories and ideas psychoanalysts may have about the psyche and its disorders, the practice of psychoanalysis remains relatively constant, letting its patients talk until patterns develop that eventually become apparent to the patients themselves. Repetitions, paradoxes, and blockages push to the fore in this process as if by themselves. This can take many years, however, and requires enormous restraint on the part of practitioners in terms of rushing to give advice and tips.

A cure is not guaranteed and statistically there is no higher chance of cure than in control groups. The value of psychoanalysis is therefore not to be found in a modern medical logic, which wants to heal as efficiently as possible. Rather, even the cure itself is removed from objective observability. Instead of making man quickly available to his social task, it makes him linguistically accessible to himself. He is not necessarily integrated into existing structures (made workable), but even possibly less controllable.

An analyst who does his job well is the opposite of a guru who tells his followers how to live. Rather, he sets processes in motion that he cannot capture and control. He does this solely through the liberating power of listening. He is thus the paradigmatic figure of humility: a priest without a rosary. This attitude of making oneself superfluous also constitutes good education and good governance. It is successful generativity.

Frugal wealth

With the formulation of frugal prosperity, the economist Wolfgang Sachs calls for a fundamental rethinking of the connection between consumption and quality of life. While reactionary circles like to talk about climate dictatorship and restrictions on personal freedom, the reduction of resource consumption can also be understood as a relief and enrichment. Nobody wants to buy a new washing machine every five years. And most people would feel better if they did not have to cook for themselves after work, but could take advantage of the inexpensive offers of the neighborhood kitchen, which uses fresh food from the region and hardly has to throw anything away based on prior queries via app.

I do not even want to get into degrowth debates at this point but leave it at the hint that asceticism in consumption can lead to completely new forms of luxury. In the words of Bruno Latour and Nikolaj Schultz: „It is not about „less growth", but about finally prospering.

5 Humility and universalism

Asceticism is fine, but why, for what purposes, when and to whom should one be humble? Without ethics, humility is disoriented.

Universalism instead of identity politics

The philosopher Omri Boehm also distances himself from identity politics. However, he takes a quite different approach than Musa Al-Gharbi. Instead of empirically demonstrating the mendacity of performative progressivism, he points out its conformist premises in order to arrive at a more comprehensive and coherent ethics.

The basic argumentation figure of identity-political thinking is a shortened form of standpoint epistemology. According to it, only those who have a certain identity are entitled to certain insights and evaluation criteria. In practice, identity politics usually takes the form of *deference politics* (probably best translated as the *politics of deference*). In the spirit of humble collaboration, subaltern voices are given the stage. The underlying assumption is that there are basically no universal human duties, but only interests whose equal participation in the discourse must be made possible.

A weak critique of *deference politics* states that the subaltern group is structurally represented by someone who has the right identity but is not representative of it. This is what philosopher Olúfẹ́mi O. Táíwò calls *elite capture.* He points out that „elite" is not an identity or social position, but a relation. As a Black university professor, he argues, he is subaltern to his colleagues but is counted among the one-percenters in relation to the Black population of the world Giving voice to the „most oppressed" person in the room merely opens the stage to one person *in the room.* But it is not enough to let the least elite person in the room speak, he said. New „spaces" would have to be built. *Platforming* subaltern voices can only be a means to an end, he said, to get the right points on the agenda. Hiding behind subaltern voices is not an act of humility, but one of cowardice. It is much more important to build alliances and structures. We must not get caught up in the process and lose sight of the actual goal.

The strong argument against identity thinking, on the other hand, says that trauma does not give privileged insight into what to do. While it may sometimes be true that privileged experience is needed to understand situations (as in arguing that men have little meaningful to contribute about the experience of childbearing), it is mistaken as a political and philosophical position. It undercuts the possibilities of human empathy and imagination. This does more damage to meticulously crafted versions—like the feminist standpoint epistemology of Sandra Harding, which demonstrates that gender bias is often built into „objective" scientific knowledge.

As Boehm points out, an ethical evaluation can only refer to abstract principles. Whether something is right or wrong can be judged only by whether it violates such principles. The guideline for this is the human intellect, which, according to Kant, is to be used independently—which is possible for every human being. A „thinking as", on the other hand, is not an independent thinking, but is bound to the customs and norms of the time. It is therefore unreflective conformism.

Boehm postulates with Kant a radical universalism, which is necessarily a humanism, because dignity results from the ability to think independently. Only man is capable of fulfilling his duty and only he is therefore a complete ethical subject who can be more than a passive holder of rights. Kant's universalism is radical because it makes no concessions to the mores and norms of the epoch. Accordingly, Boehm's heroic figures are John Brown and Martin Luther King Jr. who, in their commitment against slavery and John Crow, respectively, did not allow themselves to be carried away into compromise, but remained true to their principles, even when death and imprisonment were threatened for it. With the philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson, Boehm refers to people who follow their moral sense against the prevailing norms as *ethical geniuses*. He agrees with Kant that a small group of such ethical geniuses must hold up a mirror to the world in order to trigger the further spread of thinking for oneself.

Now, a term like genius seems to have little to do with humility. One immediately thinks of the bosses of Silicon Valley, who like to see themselves as geniuses and have absolutely nothing to do with humility. But an ethical genius has little to do with an inventor or company founder. The two genius types resemble each other solely in a certain nonconformism. Where the biggest difference lies is in humanism. Brown and King opposed dehumanization. They proclaimed uncompromisingly that a human being with dignity could not have a price. The tech giants, on the other hand, must be lavishly persuaded to effectively combat terrorism, child pornography, and human trafficking. Even more, they treat people as data vectors that are freely tradable.

Humility in Kant's sense is not submission to other people or conventions, but solely to the principles of universalistic humanism. It requires an a priori belief in the existence of human beings as bearers of duties. Humble collaboration thus acquires a new rationale: Why do I temporarily orient myself to the interests of others and not to my own? Because I have to put my interests aside in order to achieve certain results that humanism commands. Humble collaboration, then, is not an end in itself, but must be strategically justified. As Boehm points out, the value of collectives lies solely in their ability to protect the rights of humans and other living beings. In this respect, there are also collective duties that arise from historical and future responsibility.

Belief in humanistic universalism is a necessary condition for humility.

Universalism of humility

If one adheres to radical universalism, then humility can only be understood as a sense of duty. However, since the goal of this text is to convey that humility is in people's self-interest, it is necessary to establish a foundation that goes beyond Kant, as found in Simone de Beauvoir's *morality of ambiguity*. It helps us to realize that overcoming one's own immaturity is not just one option among many, but is inevitable for a successful life.

Beauvoir starts from the freedom to decide (which basically corresponds to man's ability to use his intellect, which for Kant establishes man's dignity) and describes various ways in which people shirk the burden of this freedom. Children take for granted the objective correctness of their parents' values. In this respect, they are not yet moral subjects. Only as adults do they have to realize that they are free. If they deny this freedom, they must live as unfree human beings (in the English translation they are called „sub-men," which could be translated richly unhappily as „subhumans") or subject them to other values to which they feel bound („serious human beings"). In this way, however, they are morally no further along than children. If they recognize that the values are wrong, they can withdraw into nihilism and renounce to pursue any goals („nihilists"). But they can also throw themselves into ever new projects without caring about their meaning. In doing so, they ignore the interests of the people around them („adventurers"). One level above, Beauvoir sees such people who enthusiastically devote themselves to social goals. But if they do not pay attention to the interests of their fellow human beings, they ignore their freedom and treat them like things („passionate people").

According to Beauvoir, only those who respect the freedom (and thus the dignity) of others and make their interests their own goal are truly free. Only those who also work for the freedom of others are truly free, according to Beauvoir. She concludes that while such an ethic is as individualistic as Kant's ideal of virtue or the Christian ethic of salvation. But it is not solipsistic, because it recognizes that the individual is defined only by his relationship to the world and to other individuals. A non-social existence is excluded. One exists only insofar as one is in contact with other people.

How do we know that we are violating our own dignity by taking away the freedom of our fellow human beings? Dignity is not an organ and does not contain nerve endings. It therefore has no way of telling us that we have violated it. That our dignity is violated, we feel nevertheless. A lack of recognition as a human being expresses itself in extreme cases by putting us in chains. But even when „friends" only call us when they need help moving, we feel the sting of disrespect. But how do we take away our own freedom by taking away others'? Recognition is only worth something when it is freely given. If I command my subordinates to applaud me, that praise is empty. I cannot know if the recognition is authentic if my counterpart is powerless to give me an honest answer. Only freely given love is genuine.

The sociologist Hartmut Rosa shows that experiences of resonance can only be made in responsive relationships. Resonance is the experience that we can make contact with the world without controlling it. In moments of resonance, the world not only echoes us back, but speaks to us in its own voice. Life can be experienced in them as valuable in itself.

The social philosopher Axel Honneth distinguishes three spheres of recognition that are important for people in modern society. The first is the sphere of love: Man needs recognition in the form of primary relationships with strong emotional bonds, which of course can only be entered into with a limited number of people. This includes the parent-child relationship as well as friendships or erotic two-way relationships. Only when a person has such strong relationships can he or she develop emotional self-confidence, which is a prerequisite for being able to empathize with other people and adopt their perspectives. Only in this way can a person give credit to others. At the same time, these relationships help to deal with experiences of disregard.

In the sphere of recognition of law, human beings receive recognition insofar as they are treated as individuals capable of moral judgment. The moral legitimacy of modern law depends on the capacity for consent of the legal persons concerned, who must thus be regarded as morally capable of judgment. As such, they can develop self-respect in this sphere.

In the third sphere of recognition, the economy, a person can perceive himself as capable. In the bourgeois-capitalist economic system, the principle of achievement serves as a norm of recognition. The claim is to „award income, access, rank and office solely according to the standards of knowledge and ability." Those who are successful are rewarded with money as a symbolic means of recognition. The experience of being recognized for individual talents and abilities gives rise to the self-relationship of self-esteem.

In summary, (1) from the sphere of recognition of love the self-relation of self-confidence could be gained, (2) from the right the self-respect and (3) from the economy the self-esteem. People could thus conceive of themselves as needy, reasonable, and valuable persons. Again, these self-relations can only be developed if recognition is freely given. This does not mean that it must be given wholeheartedly, only that we know that we have not forced it.

We must thus understand the freedom of our fellow human beings as our own task. This leads to the paradox that others, by living out their freedom, can restrict my freedom. Beauvoir does not deny this, but points to the human capacity for reconciliation. In the resulting tension, we must make the decision to work for the freedom of our fellow human beings.

We are not only *morally* obligated to recognize the dignity of others. Rather, it is in our own interest: If we fail to do so, we violate our own dignity. Without humility there is no

freedom. Beauvoir thus provides the foundation for a universalism of humility that is as solid as Kant's derivation of universalism, but makes it clear to us that we can only develop in relationship to others. She shows us that only in humility can we lead a fulfilling, successful life, and experience resonance.

The reference to actor-network theory made earlier can be taken up again here. Let us recognize that we can never act as detached individuals: We are brought into the world by a mother and a whole team of health professionals, we are educated in a school, we work with colleagues as well as clients. We do nothing alone. Latour would even have us go a step further, to acknowledge that we are not fundamentally different from non-human actors in our networked nature: I need a plane to cross the Atlantic just as much as my suitcase. And likewise, a non-human actor can be part of my network, such as the plane that flies me across the Atlantic (which in turn needs pilots in its network). If we now destroy our networks, we also destroy ourselves. This is exactly what Latour and Schultz mean when they say that we must learn that the world we live in is the world we live in.

Sexual self-determination

The struggle for social recognition that is being forced upon trans people in particular should not be dismissed as identity politics under any circumstances. This question is about nothing less than the right of everyone to turn his or her own mind to the question of who he or she is. In this very respect, far too many people live in conformism. They refuse to question handed-down structures and to accept the duty of freedom.

Transpersons should be understood by everyone as an inspiration to ask oneself who one wants to be. (One could call them ethical geniuses in this respect.) Sexuality is nothing more and nothing less than the most intimate sphere in which this question can be asked. Only when I am able to ask myself this question (or to face it) and not hastily brush aside troubling answers am I truly free. This is exactly where humility lies: not to think that the socially provided answer (my *self-knowledge*), is the right one, but to be open to the frightening processes of self-exploration (*thinking for myself*).

The YouTubers of the channels *Contrapoints* and *Philosophy Tube*, Natalie Wynn and Abigail Thorn have stood out from the crowd of *breadtube channels for* years with their analytical and vulnerable videos. First Wynn and somewhat later Thorn underwent a public reflection of their transition process and connected it to universal philosophical questions. Both transferred their willingness to self-thinkingly confront difficult political questions to their own selves, drawing conclusions from their discomfort with their own gender identities. Wynn, in particular, has since reflected on the psychological and social toll of this process. The need to position oneself in a web of identity politics trench warfare only makes transitioning, which is already fraught with self-doubt, all the more difficult: Can one justify one's transition with diagnosed *gender dysphoria*? Does

one have a *non-binary gender identity*, such as *genderfluid* or *pangender*? How does one position oneself to same sex-attraction after that? To whom is LGBTIQ+ solidarity extended? The meritocracy then comes around the corner with the alleged injustice of sports competitions involving transwomen—as if we had no real problems!

All these questions and „problems" are just not that important from a universalist perspective. The right to autonomous self-determination is universal. That the community itself struggles with this is surely due to the path dependency of past and continued discrimination that has divided it and made it more manageable. „Real" trans people find it necessary to distinguish themselves from *gender fluids* in order to gain recognition as women.

Now the position „let everyone do as they please" is naive in the face of never-ending discrimination and threats. Political alliances are vital. This makes the representation of queer stories and people in the media all the more important. Only the adoption of perspective can lead to empathy and inspire reflection on one's own identity. Natalie Wynn and Abigail Thorn (as well as their pioneer Kat Blaque) are necessary voices that can guide us in living more authentic lives.

And even though our self-reflection reinforces us in our gender identity, our self-interest requires solidarity with the LGBTIQ+ community. To understand this, another ethical position must be introduced. Cyberneticist Heinz von Foerster defines freedom as the greatest possible number of choices. This does not mean the abundance of consumer society, but the number of choices we can make—whereby, according to von Foerster, we only really have to decide in those situations when we are dealing with questions that are in principle undecidable. So not questions like „Is lettuce healthier than gummy bears?" but „How do I want to live?" Then we have to face the requirement of making a decision, as Beauvoir also demands. So, if I want to be free, then I must keep open the possibility for myself (and others) to make choices. Not least the question of who I am.

That cybernetic ethics also provides a language for sexual self-determination in terms of the free disposition of one's sexuality (i.e., protection from sexual assault in particular) is illustrated by China Miéville in the novel *Perdido Street Station*, a central narrative strand of which describes the framing of rape in a society whose laws and values literally correspond to Foerster's ethical imperative.

„What did he do?" he asked.

„He is guilty," Kar'uchai said soberly, „of election disqualification in the second degree, with utter contempt."

„What do you mean?" exclaimed Isaac. „What has he done? What does it mean? Denial of the election? I cannot do anything with that!"

„It is the only crime we know of, Grimneb'Lin," Kar'uchai replied in an unchanged even tone. „To deprive another of the ability to choose freely, to forget his concrete reality, to

de-realize him, to forget that you are a nodus in a matrix, that actions have consequences. We must not deny self-determination to a fellow creature. What else is community but a means for all of us individuals to have the opportunity to choose freely."

Kar'uchai shrugged his shoulders and gestured vaguely at the world outside. „Your urban institutions … talk and talk of individuality and smother it in class conceit and hierarchy until the only choice anyone may have left is between three kinds of destitution. We have much less, in the desert. We hunger, sometimes, and thirst. But we are free to make any choice that presents itself. Except when someone forgets himself, forgets the reality of his companions, as if he were an individual alone … And steals food and denies others the choice to eat from it, or conceals that he has found game and denies others the choice to hunt it, or gets angry and does violence without reason, depriving another of the freedom to decide that he does not want to be hurt and not live in fear. A minor who takes the cloak of a beloved other to smell it at night—it denies the choice to wear the cloak, but with respect, with an excess of respect. Other denials, however, cannot even cite respect to mitigate the severity of the act. To kill—not in war or defense—to murder—that is such a lack of respect, such an utter lack of respect, as to deny not only the choice to live or die at that moment—but every other possible choice for all time that could have been: to fish in the salt marsh or to dice or to tan hides or to write poetry or to cook stew—all those choices are taken away by that one act. This is denial of choice in the highest degree. But all denials rob from the future as well as from the present. Yagharek is guilty of an ugly, a despicable forgetting. Of denial of choice in the second degree."

„What has he done?" cried Isaac, [....]

Kar'uchai answered dispassionately.

„With you, it would be called rape."

[…]

In our country it would be called rape.

Isaac could not prevent the relevant images from immediately coming to his mind. The act itself, of course, though it remained hazy (did he hit her? Held her down? Where did it happen? Did she scream, fight back?). What he saw, abundantly clear, were all the prospects, the paths to the future, the possibilities that Yagharek had stolen.

He saw the decisions that were denied.

The decision not to have sexual intercourse, not to suffer pain. The decision not to be exposed to the risk of pregnancy. And then—if she had actually conceived? The decision not to have an abortion? The decision not to carry the child to term?

The decision to treat Yagharek with respect?

Isaac's lips moved silently, but Kar'uchai had not finished speaking.

„It was my decision that he denied.“

In the intimate sphere of sexuality, the importance of freedom is particularly evident. An ethics of freedom of choice does not exempt us from making decisions but grants us the freedom to decide. As Isaac's contradictory thoughts on abortion show, this ethic does not take thinking away from us. Every pregnant person must make this decision, which is only in a few cases without alternative. Humility means letting her make this decision, but also not putting her in this situation against her will. At this point it is already apparent that humility implies the precautionary principle, which will be discussed in more detail in the chapter on antifragility.

A political movement for humility

The goal of the movement of *convivialism* is to promote a good living together. It can be understood as the practical unfolding of a universalism of humility. The name derives from a word that in French stands for cozy get-together. It thus focuses on the conditions that must be met for people to live well together. Its central message can be described in five principles and one moral rule:

1. *The principle of common naturalness* states that people are part of nature and must protect it.
2. *The principle of common humanity* declares all discrimination illegitimate.
3. *The principle of common sociality* expresses that people can live only in community.
4. *The principle of legitimate individuation* grants everyone the right to develop.
5. *The principle of creative conflict* states that conflict is necessary to enable progress and to reconcile opposing interests.

These five principles are united by the categorical imperative *never to allow hubris*. This means not to place oneself above others and not to tolerate corruption in oneself or others. The individual principles can be understood to mean that one should not elevate oneself above nature or other people. One should live together with other people, let them have their individuality and let the different views one has clash openly but peacefully. Individual differences must not lead to systematic differences.

Specifically, the convivialists propose, among other things, a minimum as well as a maximum income to keep the social gap from widening. The resulting reduction in inequality would make it harder to command others. (See also the argument from the collaboration chapter that too much wealth inequality limits the effectiveness of contracts). Ending the labor society as a meritocracy would reduce incentives to exploit others to occupy the top position in a social field.

In summary, one can speak of an ideology of moderation, balance, or humility. If political demands such as the introduction of minimum and maximum wages sound radical, this is due to the cultural hegemony of radical neoliberalism. Convivialists argue that future-oriented and rational actors should be able to agree on such or similar consensus (they thus base their ethics on Habermas rather than on Beauvoir).

Again, with Beauvoir, however, it must be urged that human beings are always in a situation of double meaning: While they are bound by the universal rule of recognizing the dignity of others, they must interpret situationally what that means.

Phronesis

In view of the double meaning of human existence, the unambiguity suggested by Boehm leaves a stale aftertaste. It assumes that universalistic humanism reveals itself to man like a divine vision. Either one is an ethical genius to whom what is right is revealed, or one is not. Those who do not experience moral clarity are left alone with their doubts in the end.

The planning researcher Bengt Flyvbjerg offers an approach that does justice to the situatedness of moral action, but nevertheless does not lapse into the conventionalism criticized by Boehm. He has initiated a debate about phronetic research that has been productively taken up in political science. *Phronesis* refers to a practical knowledge of what to do—as opposed to knowledge of facts (*episteme*) and knowledge of how things work (*techne*). According to Flyvbjerg, it can be obtained through controlled research in the same way as factual and prescriptive knowledge. Accordingly, we do not have to be ethical geniuses, but only have to have the humility to admit that we do not know what to do and be willing to submit to a research process.

One can also find in Kant (in Boehm's interpretation) a hint that thinking plays a key role in knowing what is right. Rather than from one's own knowledge (drawn from texts and instruction), one should answer the question of what to do for oneself. Flyvbjerg rejects Kantian ethics—apparently from the idea that it is too rigid and replaces research with arbitrary imperatives. But this is not necessarily so. Universalism is a starting point for phronetic research rather than a replacement. This emphasizes a double humility: on the one hand, human dignity is set as that which no one may disregard. On the other hand, it takes into account the fact that we do not have privileged insight and have to acquire the knowledge of what to do. More than that, this research process seems most usefully implementable as a humble collaboration. This makes it possible to use the situated knowledge of everyday experts. However, this does not take us back to the realm of conventionalism as long as we only methodically insist on using our own minds. While the argument that the mass is not necessarily more moral than the individual is true, that individual still needs comrades to go along with these thought processes.

One model of what collaborative thinking and learning processes can look like can be found in participatory action research. Anthropologist Séverine Autesserre describes this approach in peacebuilding. In this approach, external consultants come into a community and help local actors build their own structures to rationally resolve conflicts and facilitate cooperation. Instead of bringing their own ideas of solutions into the community, they open up spaces for negotiation and opportunities to work together. They simply provide the impetus and resources that community members need to help themselves. This is the only way to accommodate the diversity of lifestyles.

Participatory action research has its roots in Kurt Lewin's field psychology, Paulo Freire's emancipatory pedagogy and Robert Chambers' participatory approach to development aid and is used especially in educational science. While it is relatively widespread in the English-speaking world, it can be said that since the 1970s, „The concept of action research has largely disappeared from the German research landscape."

Action research differs from academic research in that the focus is not on abstracting knowledge generation, but on continuous review and improvement of practice. Accordingly, it is conducted by practitioners under the guidance of methodological experts. The role of consultants is fundamentally different from that of social workers, for example, who collect data according to a set pattern and then formulate a strategy based on institutionalized procedures. Action research is led and carried out by those existentially affected. This opens up spaces for them to use their minds and democratize their life worlds.

6 Democracy as a humble way of life

Democracy is certainly the humblest of the forms of government. A blanket plea for democracy hardly seems necessary or interesting to me. On the other hand, it is not at all self-evident to make democracy the guiding principle for all areas of life. Reference has already been made to the democratization of education as a means of containing hubris. The project of democratic education requires a high tolerance for mistakes and the opening of parental objectives. Children are then no longer formable homunculi. No one knows in advance where the journey is going—sometimes quite literally, when it comes to planning vacations. The „power word" is not available to untie Gordian knots. Instead, procedures must be developed that enable negotiation even under everyday pressure.

Unfortunately, one cannot speak of the democratization of education taking hold. While there is a growing consensus against violence in education, the extent to which parents allow participation seems to be subject to historical fluctuations. The participation rights that students fought for in the 1970s have been partially rolled back. Similar to democratic education, the development of economic democratization does not point clearly in any particular direction. In most companies, undemocratic rule prevails.

Political scientist Robert A. Dahl, in the course of his many decades of theorizing about democracy, also considered how it would need to be applied to the economy to support political equality among the population: According to Dahl, democratizing businesses would go some way toward keeping the ownership gap from widening too much. He further argues that someone who thinks democratic government of the state is desirable would also have to support democratic government of business enterprises: the management of a business initiates regulations that are as binding on all employees as a state or a municipality. Leaving a municipality with whose laws one does not agree is even easier than quitting one's job and finding a new one.

He dismisses the arguments against the democratization of companies: property rights would not necessarily be curtailed as a result. Shareholders would be replaced by the collective of employees. The exact ownership model is open, but there is something to be said for organizing these companies as cooperatives. There is also nothing to suggest that employees would be less able to make sensible decisions for the company or to select qualified managers. There would also be no need for expropriation: The companies could be bought up by the state and gradually transferred to worker ownership.

The democratization of politics, education, and the economy anchors humility at the level of social systems. The democratization of the other social spheres of value is not to be explored here. However, an increase in stakeholder negotiation is called for everywhere.

Chat log #4 continued

3:03 pm RK

Whoa, how did you prompt the AI? Write as a really confused German sociologist?

3:04 pm KB

I made it re-read the text again and again and re-write it. When you have one too many German sociologists in there, it kind of starts doing it's own thing. :D

3:10 pm LP

Don't give the AI too many German ideas. Otherwise the singularity will be less pleasant than your dad's friends think.

3:13 pm KB

Anyway... What do you think about the argument?

3:15 pm RK

It's not so much an argument but a string of loosely connected ideas from different people.

3:20 pm KB

But at least in the end it lands on democratization of all fields as a means towards making people more humble.

3:23 pm LP

Yeah, how very pragmaticist of it. Reminds me of Dewey's democracy as a way of live. He said that democracy is not only about institutions but about living in a way where you don't ignore others legitimate interests.

3:26 pm RK

Kate probably also likes the part where she is called an ethical genius. Did you write that part yourself?

3:28 pm KB

No, I swear!

3:29 pm LP

It's not wrong though. And it comes back to the issue of courage. Being willing to question your whole identity is fucking scary.

3:30 pm KB

You bet your ass it is.

3:35 pm RK

So, now you can go back to your sugar daddy with your homework?

3:37 pm KB

I don't know. I have to think about it. You're right that it's quite a lot of ideas without any stringent argument.

Chat log #4 tbc.

Chat log #5

12/06/23

10:00 am RP

Hi Kate, this is Ryan Price from the family office. I'm writing to inform you that Hans Lieb was let go last months. We have reviewed you chat logs with him in order to make sure that he did not act inappropriately towards you. If you plan on making a formal complaint, we can help you in formulating a legally sound argument.

1:51 pm KB

No, its alright. Why was he let go?

2:30 pm RP

I'm not allowed to share any details at the moment, since there might still be legal proceedings. It's broughtly about bookkeepings.

2:31 pm KB

I thought he was some kind of therapist.

2:35 pm RP

We saw him indicating something along those lines in your chat protocols. He is certainly not a trained psychologist. But it's not concrete enough to be used in legal proceedings against him. Although your believing it might change that.

2:37 pm KB

No, no, I don't want to sue him. He was actually helping me academically.

2:39 pm RP

It looked more like attempts to indoctrinate you, to be honest.

2:41 pm KB

Is that why you fired him.

2:45 pm RP

Certainly not. As I said, bookkeeping.

2:50 pm KB

Sure.

2:51 pm RP

Actually, we would like to introduce you to a new liaison to the family office.

2:56 pm KB

I think I'll pass.

3:00 pm RP

It's not really a suggestion. If you intend to sever ties with the family office that is up to you, but you and each of your siblings has to have a liaison or be excluded from the financial aspect of it as well.

3:03 pm KB

Okay, not even pretending anymore, huh?

Number blocked.

Chat log #5 ends.

Chat log #4 continued

12/18/23

9:56 am KB

Now mom is trying to make me talk to the old man.

10:01 am RK

That's fucked up. I mean, she knows best how horrible he is.

10:03 am KB

But the money...

10:06 am RK

Are you going to do it?

10:07 am KB

No, fuck him.

10:10 am RK

So, you're not going to come back to school next semester?

10:12 am KB

I don't know how they're going to try to punish me.

10:15 am RK

What are you going to do then?

10:17 am KB

I don't know. Join the army?

10:20 am LP

But, like, doesn't your mom or you have enough money to finish grad school?

10:23 am KB

Nah, if we're cut off from the family office, there is nothing.

10:27 am LP

Are you angry?

10:35 am KB

I've been angry at him since I was, like, 8. The way he just discarded us. Made my mom dependent on the family office money. It's disgusting. Now I'm angry at her too, because she doesn't really say anything against the horrible shit he says publicly. She's just too afraid to be on her own. So... I don't know. I guess I'm more resigned to the situation than anything else.

Now, I want to do something that's not just annoying him but hurting him...

Well, that doesn't change anything, right? Like, hurt animals bite...

I'd like to reform him and all those others like him. But what can I do? They don't have to listen to anyone as long as there are enough people who are desperate enough to take their money and do whatever.

10:45 am RK

Yeah, makes you think that the only thing that will change anything is revolution. Like, put them all against a wall and be done with it.

10:49 am LP

Well, you'd be the first to end up dead. You don't even have a gun, even less a plan.

10:50 am RK

Hey, don't challenge my revolutionary romanticism. I might still become a partisan.

10:51 am LP

Bella ciao :P

But honestly, Kate, what are you up to next?

10:55 am KB

Hell, if I knew.

11:04 am RK

Okay, hear me out...

You say you want to help democratize society, you want to end Narcissism, and make people more humble, so we can live in a world where hurt people don't hurt people. (Maybe even a world where we can live at all, because climate change doesn't kill us.) At the same time you're the estranged daughter of the richest man on earth who is trying to pull you back into the fold. And now you want to throw that away in order to punish him for being the kind of person one has to be in order to become the richest man on earth. When you could psyop him into not being as much of a bastard. Sounds a little selfish to me.

11:20 am KB

Umm, were you asleep when he basically denied my existence publicly only a few days ago? Do you think I can just go back, tell him "sorry that I thought I was a girl, I'll be your best little boy now", and then wormtongue him into saving the world?

11:23 am RK

It sounds a lot more stupid, when you put it like that... but still, yeah. If it has the potential to save the world.

11:25 am KB

Plus even if he became a decent person from one moment to the next, he would lose everything he has. Like... immediately. You don't just stop exploiting little children in Uganda, stop polluting the environment of your factories, build decent infrastructure etc. and stay the richest man in the world... or even rich at all. It's still a fucking SYSTEM of exploitation. Everyone's in on the joke.

11:28 am LP

She's right. You have to build the institutions that prepare larger changes.

11:33 am RK

I don't buy it. Sounds like propaganda to me. Even if you can't make him change everything, that's the best shot you have. What else are you going to do? Join a union, do poll drives, volunteer in a shelter, found a DSA chapter? Don't get me wrong. Those are all worthy tasks. But you have significantly different possibilities. Stop writing fanfiction about changing billionaires minds and just do it.

11:35 am KB

Okay, ruthAI, lay out a ten point plan for me to change the world through reconciling with the biggest douche in the world. Pretend you're a smart person.

11:40 am RK

Don't be so condescending when you don't have a plan yourself. You know I'm right.

11:41 am KB

Try again.

11:47 am RK

Okay you want ten steps? I'll give you ten steps.

11:51 am KB

I'm waiting.

12:21 pm RK

1. Crawl back. But do it slowly. Agree to talk to the new guy.

2. Ignore the old man being an asshole and dead naming you. Say nice things about him online. He still wants to be considered the most important person, who will save the world. Push his narcissistic buttons.

3. Get a job in one of his companies.

4. Get your shares in the family office.

5. Get closer to him and subtly influence him to become a less shitty guy.

6. Fund the institutions Lana was talking about: research, democracy, social justice etc.

7. Buy yourself a political position.

8. Make a green new deal/land reform.

9. and 10. Reap what you sowed.

12:23 pm KB

That's moronic.

12:25 pm RK

Tell me when you've got something better.

12:30 pm KB

I'm ignoring the fact that you're even bringing up consoling with him only because I love you very much. That's a fucking bigoted thing to suggest. He literally wants me dead. He wants to kill who and what I am. There is no way back. Telling me I could just stop being a brat in order to save the world is fucking hurtful.

12:41 pm RK

I'm sorry.

I'm an asshole.

Can I come over to apologize?

Chat log #4 tbc.

E-mail conversation between h.lieb3@*****.com and kate.bokononova@***.edu

03/20/24 HL to KB

Hi Kate,

I'm sorry I didn't write earlier. I had some issues getting back on track after they fired me. I don't want to bore you with stories of finding a new job, place and so on. It's funny how you can go from working for the richest man on the planet to basically nothing, when they decide to not only let you go, but keep you from any comparable position. Just know that I didn't mean to just ghost you.

I kept thinking about the things we talked about: the way individualism makes us forget that we're only whole persons in the communities that we live in and the psychopaths who were kept in check a little bit by the structures that were destroyed by modernity. It seems like those developments make it more and more difficult to find ways to live with any semblance of dignity. I realized that the only connection I felt in the last years was to you. So maybe you can forgive me and we can continue figuring out what's happening together.

I've been reading some stuff that might be interesting to those topics. Thinking about individualism and the destruction of social structures can easily lead one to conclude that we made a huge mistake in becoming modern. I mean, as a society. But if you look at it from a materialist perspective, there is nothing else that could have happened. We shouldn't get stuck in what ifs. The philosopher Rahel Jaeggi shows that the way we live now can only be understood as the result of people's attempts to overcome situations that were unlivable. We cannot go back to a better situation, because there never was one. Instead we must find out what is keeping us from learning how to get to a higher level of problem solving. What is keeping us from organizing for automated luxury communism?

Anyhow, I'm looking forward to your answer. If you decide not to answer, I can understand.

Hope you are doing okay considering the situation.

Yours

Hans

04/01/24 KB to HL

Dear Hans,

I'm sorry for not answering right away. I don't use this account much. It's basically just for academic stuff.

First of all, I'm not mad anymore. I was though. Why did you not contact me in any other way? You had my number...

But it doesn't matter. I'm glad to hear from you. I hope you have recovered from your encounter with the family. What are you up to now?

I was quite down for a while. They tried blackmailing me again with my allowance, but I cut the cord, which meant I had to find different ways of funding the end of my PhD time. Luckily I've found some sources not in any way connected to the tech bro sphere. Doesn't matter. Now I'm back to coding for my first paper. A little normality after the emotional turmoil of the last year. I try to ignore the news etc.

So, you're still up for debating theory? My friends give me shit for trying to get a theoretical grasp on things instead of acting. But it seems like I'm more of a Marx than a Lenin. I can't just start doing something when I feel like I haven't gotten to the root of what's happening. They say I'm a typical bourgeois for evading action and rationalizing it with a lack of knowledge. Maybe that's what I am...

Anyways, I love what you told me about Jaeggi's theory. Yeah, communitarianism cannot mean going back to a place where we've already been. We have to create new connections and communities that surpass the weaknesses of the form of life (yes, I read her Wikipedia) we are currently living in. Let's do that.

In order to continue our conversation I have attached the text about humility that I promised you.

Love

Kate

04/07/24 HL to KB

Dear Kate,

I'm so happy you responded. I loved the text about hunility. Even if it's machine written it contains so much of the vibe of your thought. (Isn't it funny how we have to write institutional texts ourselves while we let the AI write those texts that are meaningful to ourselves. Kind of the wrong way around.)

When I look back at what we discussed it feels like we're getting somewhere. I'll try to summarize where I think we are right now:

1. All people, including those in power, need a functioning society if they are to survive or even live well. (In the end even the billionaire can't survive without their butler.)
2. The threats to cohesion are not easily solvable because they stem from hubris (the

tendency to look at ourselves as something other than actor-networks and disregarding or even willingly hurting others).

3. Hubris can be consciously combated, but not definitively overcome, because it is part of human nature. Some people are just not able to take into account others freedom and dignity.

4. Therefore, both individual insight into the personal benefits of individual practices of humility and a social anchoring of practices of humility are needed.

5. Individually, humility is a practice of temporary orientation to the interests of others. (Orientation to the interests of others is at the same time what constitutes our freedom and dignity.)

6. On a societal level, humility is only possible through increased democratization of all areas of life.

But where do we go from here? Are we at the point of action? Should we dive into the vita activa?

Yours

Hans

04/16/24 KB to HL

Dear Hans,

I kind of agree with your summary. Although I'm not sure where some of your points come from. Hubris isn't something we have been explicitly talking about. It seems like you lump the whole dark tetrad together into one concept. Can you explain this to me?

Also, what are practices of humility and how would democratization work? I think we have to be clear about what that entails before we can act.

Regarding individual humility, I find it really hard to make it a habit. It seems like hubris (as I understand it) is some kind of addiction. It's just so much easier to think of myself as separate from the world. It comes naturally although I do know that it's a learned way of thinking. Plus it's less like an addiction to cigarettes or weed, but like overeating where you cannot just say you don't eat any more. Humility is like interacting in moderation. I mean it's not hard to be friendly and polite, but thinking of whether my actions intervene in others lives and coordinating with others about how we live together is more difficult. It's a bit like acting environmentally conscious: you have to think about long chains of interdependency all the time. Also you swim against the water a lot, because the world is structured in a way that doesn't make you automatically act correctly.

I don't know. I guess I have more questions than answers. Looking forward to your reply.

Love

Kate

04/23/24 HL to KB

Dear Kate,

you're right, I jumped to some conclusions. The hubris idea I got reading a psychology paper that said that the variable *honesty-humility* is the only HEXACO dimension with which all dimensions of the tetrad are negatively correlated. So I asked google what's the opposite of humility? Turns out that's hubris. That's the amount of thinking I put in. Probably doesn't hold up to philosophical scrutiny, but it's obvious enough to me.

Practices of humility is an extension of this thought. When we talk about hubris, we're not talking about individual personalities anymore. Rather hubris is a mode of behavior. We're on the level of sociology now. And more or less famously, sociologists are really critical of pathologizing deviant behavior. Like, the last sociological paper that tried to formulate a theory of psychopathy is from 1948. Instead nowadays medical sociologists prefer to talk about how those labels produce negative consequences for the labeled. Of course there is still some talk of the Machiavellianism of politics or sadistic policies, but those uses are not meant strictly in the sense of the psychological concepts. Only Narcissistic culture is still talked of as something that might produce specific personalities. Those prognoses are not issued by sociologists though but by culture critics. Sociologists instead prefer to talk about individualism. Only the social psychological concept of authoritarianism has the potential to be used in sociological circles. So all in all, it's possible to talk about hubris not using the dark tetrad. It was merely a spring board into thinking about hubris.

Now, when we talk sociologically about human action, we normally talk about patterns of behavior. Practice is one of the more used terms for this. Practices of hubris are mostly reducible to practices of violence. On the one hand we have physical and verbal violence, but also structural violence that is caused by dehumanization and disregard of whole groups of people. Cultural violence on the other hand are those practices that dehumanizeand degrade people in the first place. If we go back to the "evils of society" we can extrapolate the categories of violent practices: While Martin Luther King Jr. indicted racism, excessive materialism, and militarism, China's internal security strategy opposes terrorism, (religious) extremism, and separatism. If we universalize King's triad, universal categories of social pathology emerge: exclusion and vilification, inequality and exploitation, as well as physical violence and authoritarianism. To balance the inherent conformism of the Chinese formulation, this triad must be symmetrized: We can speak of segregation and marginalization, extremism and totalitarianism, and terrorism and terror. But I don't want to dwell on those too much.

I'm more interested in practices of humility. If practices of hubris disregard others or even use them as objects, practices of humility must be those that value each human being in their full humanity. Dignity, respect, tolerance etc. „One person, one vote" must

not only be guaranteed in elections, but in every sphere of life. Democracy as a way of life seems to me to be the opposite to violence as a way of life.

Of course I know about all the aporias of democracy. On it's face, democracy is just not possible in all situations. Especially in situations of time scarcity, including everyone in decision-making seems to be impossible. Maybe humility requires a society of time-richness, a society where immediate decisions are not necessary. That is to say: a forward-looking society that anticipates future decision-making situations so everyone can be involved.

Connecting this to your thoughts on addiction: we fall back on habits in situations of uncertainty and pressure. If I planned out my meal plan in advance I'm not confronted with the immediate decision of whether I'll have the salad or the schnitzel. If I have strategies for dealing with pressure, I don't go back to smoking a cigarette. There is an interesting lyric in a German song from a couple of years back about a post-apocalyptic society, something like: „weed is legal, but you don't need it to endure life".

Anyway, that was a lot of rambling. I'm looking forward to your response.

Love

Hans

05/05/24 KB to HL

Dear Hans,

Okay, I gotta nerd out in a different way. Have you listened to Kendrick's new track yesterday? I don't even know your taste in music... anyway, bear with me... so, there is a beef between Kendrick Lamar and Drake, you know? I've been listening to Kendrick a little bit for some time. And there have been some shots fired in the past. Like ten years ago, Kendrick kind of dissed everyone in rap. Drake has been sore about it forever. I know this sounds like gossiping, but I've got a point. This needs some context. So in some of the songs on Drake's past albums, he low key dissed Kendrick without naming him. Now, Kendrick has made a line on "Like That" where he dissed Drake and J. Cole directly. Afterwards Drake published some songs where he dissed Kendrick openly and used AI voices of Kendrick's heroes. So Kendrick answered with a normal diss track. Making fun of Drake being lame and not a part of rap culture. He also warned Drake not to get personal. Drake retaliated with a track, where he said that Kendrick hit his wive. Kendrick then went berserk and accused Drake of being a pedophile and colonizer. For context: Drake has weird publicly known relationships to underage girls. He also likes to copy the style of other rappers and has ghostwriters.

Well, in between listening to Kendrick's incredible disses on repeat I started listening to the Dissect podcast that takes apart all of Kendrick's albums. And this is the crazy part. Kendrick not only does intricate concept albums that are composed like operas, there is

a meta-narrative of his albums. In his first album he describes how he got out of the projects and became a rapper by recognizing that he has to take his christian faith seriously and tell young men to abstain from violence. In the second album he raps about being tempted by the industry (a.k.a. Uncle Sam) and his worst inclinations (a.k.a. Lucy = Lucifer). He recognizes that he is a prophet and has to act as one for his culture. Still he is afraid of being shunned or killed for this. In the third album he basically preaches about the consequences of hubris. So it's kind of his moment of taking on his duties as a prophet. But: The Dissect podcast has this fascinating analysis how Kendrick basically retells the story of Jonah—the unwilling prophet who tries to evade being a prophet by first running away and, when this doesn't work, telling the message of God in a way that turns its meaning on its head. Kendrick then even released the album in reversed track order—showing that it shows two different ways: one towards redemption, one towards vice and death. In the fourth album, though, he breaks down in the face of his own vice. The album is about how he started therapy and reflecting his sex addiction and adultery. He talks about his childhood trauma and his relationship to relatives who are trans. It feels like a really hurtful cleansing where he even doubts the validity of his faith which led him to bigotry.

So, like that's where we are in Kendrick's own curated story. And now, somehow he is wading into the muddy depths of feuding with the most famous rapper of our time. Why does he do this? My theory is: he exemplifies to us the story of a real prophet. What's a prophet? It's not some holy person necessarily. It's just someone who got a mission from God. It doesn't mean they are the perfect person to get the job. They aren't pure of heart or especially moral, but they can't hide from the mission they are given.

Kendrick's mission seems to be to cleanse rap culture. Misogyny, cultural appropriation, excessive materialism, abuse etc. Drake is basically just an example for everything that's going wrong. All the specific details of his case are relevant but only to exemplify the larger evil of the music industry.

So, what I mean to say is: the "ethical geniuses" of Omri Boehm might be something like prophets. Boehm's favorite examples of John Brown and MLK are actually quite weird characters in some ways. Brown killed a lot of people, MLK was adulterous. But we have to separate the "mission" from those personal qualities… Or rather: The way those people struggle with their own vices can be exemplary for us. Of course neither Brown nor MLK grew old enough to be able to reconcile their moral successes and failures. What's that called? Shadow integration? With Kendrick we have an example of someone narrating this inner struggle.

An interesting aside is that Kendrick has earlier said that he doesn't like cancel culture. So, saying that someone is problematic and should be shunned seems to be hypocritical. But what Kendrick does is actually not just labelling Drake problematic and waiting for the online mob to ostracize him. Instead he destroyed him with the weapons

of rap culture. If you are against something don't just go into online mode and down vote something, you have to fight it.

I'm sorry I didn't really answer you. I was kind of preoccupied with this whole thing too much. Hope you can take something from my confused thoughts.

Love

Kate

05/12/24 HL to KB

Dear Kate,

now that was a fascinating detour. I'm not entirely if I get how it connects to the bigger point, but I'll go along on this ride with you. It's not really my music, but "Meet the Grahams" gives me the shivers. I've never heard anyone giving voice to ice cold hate and disgust like that.

What's fascinating to me is how the beef fits into todays culture and politics. Calling someone a pedophile is now the ultimate character assassination and the sexual abuse of children is widely considered one of the most heinous crimes. At the same time many mass child abuse cases (like in the Catholic Church and the scouts) are still being uncovered, the internet gave abusers an interconnectivity that has never before been possible, and growing inequality is opening more and more possibilities for the abuse of children. This has led to a situation where conspiracy thinking, projection, and collective psychological displacement dominate American politics in the form of Qanon-type thinking that combines satanic panic, antisemitism, and religious fundamentalism. I sometimes think our era might once be called the era of pedophilia because it's the border region between a time where children could be abused at will and (hopefully) a time where children are protected by laws, social services, and societal norms. It's the era where abuse is prevalent but there is also increasingly a language to talk about it and call it out.

I don't want to link Kendrick to Qanon, but it's fascinating how calling out pedophilia is in both cases used as a moral bludgeon without being able to actually connect the verbal attacks to effective protective measures. So in both cases we have more of a moral panic dynamic than a democratic iteration. That is to say: the accusations work on a collective emotional basis, but do not contribute to a rational debate about policy.

Did I get that right or did I misinterpret Kendrick?

Yours

Hans

05/16/24 KB to HL

Dear Hans,

thanks for taking up the thread. I don't think you misinterpreted Kendrick. The hypocrisy of calling someone a pedophile without taking the necessary next step of doing something to really make the world safer for children that makes QAnon so hypocritical is mirrored in the way he uses "pedophile" in a rap banger. I would reiterate though that "Not Like Us" is a more rounded indictment of the music industry that uses Drake as an example. The accusations of abuse and colonization are inextricably bound together in his analysis of the music industry. He does not see his work as touching directly on institution-building, but changing the culture. He redraws the boundaries of rap culture and places the predators outside those boundaries.

What is culture? It's a process of symbolic boundary-creation that is constantly re-evaluating the conditions of inclusion. It happens through communication and produces mental frames in individuals. Those frames are never only rational or emotional. Both are mutually reinforcing. So a completely rational discussion about culture is fruitless. If you want to influence culture you have to acknowledge and use emotions. I know that's a quite Machiavellian perspective, but it's part of the process of influencing societal change towards progress.

Love

Kate

05/17/24 HL to KB

Dear Kate,

now that's an interesting question: how much Machiavellianism is admissable in bringing about a society of humility? Using moral panics to bring about change is not only very risky (because you have to draw on people's emotional frames which are currently quite racist and violent), but also ethically problematic: it's a way of influencing people so that they do not immediately recognize what is done to them. It reminds me of discussions about left-wing populism. On the one hand, it's necessary to gain cultural hegemony to support left-wing institutions, on the other, having a humanistic worldview means granting people the right to make rational decisions for themselves.

Going back to your aside about fighting directly instead of riling up the sentiments of online mobs, maybe that's how it's done: a prophet/ethical genius/organic intellectual etc. has to put themselves into harms way instead of acting like a wormtongue. Moskalenko and McCauley have written a fascinating take on martyrdom. They say that a martyr is someone who willingly puts their life on the line in order to further a greater good. Basically a martyr doesn't just risk their life but puts themselves in a position where it will probably be taken by their enemies. It's the most extreme form of non-

violent resistance: an act that shows the whole world the moral bankruptcy of the enemy. That's basically what Greta is doing all the time: showing the cowardice of the powerful and shame the rest of us for being too afraid of putting ourselves on the line. And she knows: it only works if you're non-violent. And from Otpor and Gene Sharpe we know that actually only a small part of the population has to be mobilized to effect political changes.

But now we're back to your question about individual humility: Being a martyr is a million times harder than being humble in your daily life. How does one become a martyr? Masha Gessen once quipped that figures like Greta are always autistic. It takes a certain inability to accept hypocrisy to become enraged enough to risk everything. I'm not sure that's what we are looking for though…

Hoping that you have more productive thoughts.

Yours

Hans

05/20/24 KB to HL

Dear Hans,

Martyrdom… How did we even get to this place?

Anyway, I don't think that Kendrick is a martyr. Instead he has built his own infrastructure that is not wholly reliant on the music industry. I think having that kind of an insurance against backlash is a way to become an effective messenger without risking your livelihood or even life. It's about having independent bases of power.

Let's not forget that democracy isn't only about "one person, one vote", but also about separation of powers. Plurality is definitely a precondition of a society of humility. That way, it doesn't depend entirely on the morality of people, but is ensured by interdependency. That's one of the many problems of inequality: if some people feel independent of the wider society, they come to think of their freedom as being restricted instead of guaranteed by their embeddedness in society.

So… I guess I've talked myself into being a syndicalist?! What do you think?

Love

Kate

05/21/24 HL to KB

Dear Kate,

well, syndicalism isn't the worst place to start. Strong unions are definitely the best counter-measure against inequality. Have you seen the graph showing the negative

correlation of union membership and wealth inequality? That's something that comes to my mind like every time, people ask what to do about inequality. We need really strong unions.

It's no wonder, capitalists try to keep people from unionizing. Every even mildly social democrat government should make union membership free and mandatory. Far from a revolution this will stabilize society in the long run and prevent inequality effectively.

On the same note, political party membership should be free. Nobody should be excluded from the political process because of financial strain. Sports clubs, musical and theatrical associations etc. should all be available to everyone.

That's the opposite of Nazi-style mass membership, by the way. Being a member in many different social circles is the best de-radicalization measure. Being in a cult basically means having one social world be your total way of making sense of the world. The more perspectives on the world you can fit in your worldview, the better.

Love

Hans

05/22/24 KB to HL

Dear Hans,

the thought of being in a club for every societal subsystem is a little dizzying. I mean, the day has only so many hours. And I don't really like being in a room with more than four people. Five is problematic. Six is way too many. It's funny, on a theoretical level I am all for strengthening communal and societal bonds, but in practice it makes me anxious as hell.

I guess to me the Muslim Brotherhood model of having a little study circle is optimal. Maybe we can have that (in secularized form) for everything. I'd be willing to meet some union comrades on Monday, a small political discussion group on Tuesday, band on Wednesday, badminton on Thursday, indie theatre rehearsals on Friday, and wine with friends on Saturday. Sunday is for myself. Shit, I could probably do that now...

Anyway, that's a really nice vision for society. Reminds me of the convivialists. The biggest problem currently is probably the absence of public spaces to make that kind of lifestyle possible for everyone. Plus child care is only for enabling people to work. Probably every one of those evening events needs its own child care. Maybe each time a different person doesn't participate and babysits or something. It's not impossible, but it needs an awareness of child care being a societal task.

There are a lot of small cultural changes that are necessary to make this vision possible. Like dinner not being an individual thing, but something that is organized on a communal basis, because people are out every night.

There it is again: individualism is our biggest problem. We are so proud of our little specialized kitchen utensils. Who would want to give that up? Our houses are our castles.

Hope you have an idea.

Love

Kate

05/23/24 HL to KB

Dear Kate,

Let's keep dreaming for a moment before we have our wake up call from reality. Think of media: at the moment it is done for a profit by enterprises that are increasingly owned by conservative billionaires or pension funds. At the same time they don't have enough money for either international, investigative, or local reporting.

So, my idea is: Organizing citizens as reporters in local groups might be a way to enable local journalism. But that means, you would have to have an organization which offers free training and coordinates local chapters. Of course that's never profitable.

But in some countries reporting is viewed as a public good and financed partly through taxes or something similar. I think we could take this a step further and argue that media is actually producing a shared world. Anderson's theory of the nation implies this: a nation only exists insofar it's subjects have a sense of a shared world through consuming reporting about the same events through media. In the US nowadays Democrats and Republicans do not even know about the same events and certainly do not hear a similar framing in the media. How are they supposed to feel anything but hatred for each other when they do not even live in the same world? As Gesa Lindemann says: there is no truth without a body guaranteeing it.

This is a task which is at least as important as governing, legislating, and adjudicating. Catch my drift? We could argue that media should be treated as a fourth power—and not only metaphorically, but with all the aspects of democratic control and conplete tax-funding. Furthermore it should be completely separate from the other powers, because they necessarily have an interest in influencing media coverage.

This body should organize and adjudicate standards of reporting as well as support local chapters who work on a semi-professional level. This way, we could get closer again to a shared reality and have the necessary local reporting to organize a more communal society.

Looking forward to your response.

Yours

Hans

05/24/24 KB to HL

Dear Hans,

No notes. Let's treat truth like a public good and produce it cooperatively.

But I'm still more thinking about the bases of power that are needed to get past our current predicament. Like, what are we supposed to do now? I mean as individuals, we could start organizing locally. Like, we could try to start an NGO or become local politicians and build... I don't know, where do we start?

Confusedly yours

Kate

Memo from Alfalia Research and Strategy

The Winslow-Lieb Memo

(Internal Report – Highly Confidential)

Subject: The Relationship Between Kate Bokononova and Hans Lieb

Date: May 2024

Source: *Multiple confidential informants with ties to Kate Bokononova's inner circle and associates of Hans Lieb*

Overview

Kate Bokononova, the 23-year-old transgender daughter of South African tech billionaire Neo Winslow, has been in an ongoing relationship with Hans Lieb, a 31-year-old life coach without formal psychotherapeutic credentials, since early 2023. Despite her estrangement from her father, Kate has faced scrutiny from her inner circle about the potential manipulation and undue influence Lieb may exert over her decisions. Kate, who recently severed all ties to her father's estate, now relies on a merit-based grant to support her PhD studies in psychology.

Neo Winslow, though publicly silent in official statements, frequently tweets about his daughter's decision, expressing disapproval while simultaneously engaging in public commentary on her choices. Winslow's concerns center on the potential impact of Kate's relationship with Lieb, both personally and financially.

1. Background: Kate Bokononova's Estrangement from Winslow

Kate's relationship with her father began deteriorating after her transition in 2020, culminating in her cutting ties with his estate in May 2024. She rejected the substantial financial resources Winslow had set aside for her, opting to pursue her academic ambitions independently. However, Kate's financial independence is limited, as she relies on a competitive merit-based grant to support her PhD research.

Winslow, who has been publicly critical of Kate's decisions without directly intervening, has used social media, particularly Twitter, as a platform to express his discontent. His frequent posts highlight his disappointment with Kate's estrangement and suggest that he remains concerned about her ability to manage her life without his financial backing.

2. Hans Lieb's Role and Influence

Hans Lieb, despite lacking formal qualifications as a psychotherapist, has become a central figure in Kate's personal life. Their relationship began when Kate sought emotional support in early 2023, and it quickly developed into something far more significant. Informants close to Kate report that Lieb now plays a key role in advising her on personal and professional matters, raising concerns about a potential conflict of interest and an imbalance in their relationship.

Though Lieb is not formally recognized as a doctor or therapist, his influence has extended to multiple facets of Kate's life, including her academic trajectory and personal decisions. The ongoing nature of their relationship, coupled with Lieb's increasing control, has led to speculation about whether he is capitalizing on Kate's vulnerability during her estrangement from her father.

3. Ethical Concerns and Power Dynamics

The dynamic between Kate and Lieb has become a point of concern for those close to her, particularly in light of the stark power imbalance between them. At 31, Lieb presents himself as an experienced guide and mentor, but his lack of professional training raises ethical questions about the appropriateness of his influence over Kate's decisions.

Kate, financially reliant on her grant and emotionally navigating the fallout from her father's disapproval, is in a vulnerable position. Lieb's role in this scenario—advising her on everything from academic choices to personal well-being—has drawn scrutiny, with informants questioning whether he is acting in her best interests or exploiting the situation for personal gain.

4. Winslow's Public Position

Despite his estrangement from Kate, Winslow continues to use social media to express his displeasure with her decisions. His frequent tweets about Kate's rejection of his estate and relationship with Lieb often carry a tone of disapproval, though he stops short of directly attacking her. Winslow's commentary suggests that he is deeply unsettled by the path Kate has chosen, and while he has yet to publicly denounce Lieb, his posts imply dissatisfaction with Kate's choice of advisors.

Winslow's empire in the tech industry remains unaffected by the family drama, but his public commentary risks drawing attention to Kate's personal life. This could complicate matters for her, particularly as she seeks to establish herself independently from her father's wealth and influence.

5. Financial Implications

Kate's decision to cut ties with her father's estate has left her in a precarious financial position, relying solely on her merit-based grant. While this move was seen as a declaration of her independence, it has also left her more susceptible to outside influence, particularly from individuals like Lieb. Informants suggest that Lieb's involvement in Kate's financial decisions has grown over time, though no clear evidence of manipulation has yet surfaced.

As Kate forgoes the considerable wealth of the Winslow estate, some have questioned whether Lieb's growing presence in her life could lead to financial decisions that benefit him more than her. The lack of transparency around Lieb's financial background adds to the uncertainty.

6. Ongoing Relationship and Potential Consequences

As of May 2024, Kate and Lieb's relationship shows no signs of ending. Despite concerns from those close to her, Kate appears to be increasingly dependent on Lieb for both emotional and practical support. This dynamic, coupled with her reliance on a limited grant, continues to raise red flags about the potential for exploitation.

The relationship's future, and the impact it may have on both Kate's personal development and her public standing, remains uncertain. Should further concerns about Lieb's influence emerge, the situation could become more publicly volatile, particularly if Winslow's ongoing tweets escalate the matter.

Conclusion

Kate Bokononova's ongoing relationship with Hans Lieb represents a complex interplay of personal vulnerability, financial insecurity, and questionable ethical boundaries. As Kate remains estranged from her father and increasingly reliant on Lieb, the potential for conflict and scandal grows. Winslow's public disapproval, coupled with the unclear nature of Lieb's influence, leaves the situation unresolved but fraught with risk.

End of Memo

E-mail conversation between h.lieb3@*****.com and kate.bokononova@***.edu continued

05/25/24 HL to KB

Dear Kate,

I'm as confused as you are about where to start. But I've got a hunch that there isn't one right way per se. We should probably start from ourselves. What are we willing and able to do? Maybe some biographical work can help us with that? Reflecting on where we're coming from might help us see our trajectory more clearly. Do you want to have a go?

Love

Hans

05/25/24 KB to HL

You go first.

05/27/24 HL to KB

Dear Kate,

I'll happily start. I just didn't want to bore you with my life story before asking.

My parents come from basically the same place in Northern Germany. Just a couple of small towns apart. Like, just far enough so they only got to know each other when they were in their early twenties. They met in a club that catered mostly to rural youths. "Village disco" is what we would refer to it. My mother's mother was a widowed farmer. Her father died a couple of years after the war. She basically didn't know him. My father's father was a postman. He advanced through the ranks from building telephone poles to a managing position in the regional post office. His mother was a homemaker. Of course both of my grandfathers served in the second world war as soldiers. I'm not entirely sure what they were both up to. Although my father's father liked to tell anecdotes about running from tanks. Some of my grand uncles were SS. I never had the chance to ask them about it though. So, my family is a very typical West German story of economic upward mobility after the war. My father was the first in the family to study at a university. My parents moved to Osnabrück for my father's studies. My mother was a teacher in a vocational school which didn't require a university degree back then.

Although I was born and grew up in Osnabrück, my parents gave me a distinct sense of being rooted in the region of Bremen. I guess their rural and working class upbringing gave them a sense of not quite belonging to the middle class milieu we were embedded in. Looking back, I attribute my not ever being involved in any clubs or associations to any great degree to their emotional distance to regional customs. They were always

sympathetic to Green and Social Democrat politics, but not to a degree that would make them join any party or organization. So, as a child I was mostly playing with my older brother or reading books. Social activities were always bound to school in some way.

I thought about joining a club quite often. But I was bad at sports and my parents had no inclinations to send me to the scouts or something like that. It just didn't occur to them. They had to work, do renovations on the house, father became unemployed... Then he found a new girlfriend and they divorced. Classic midlife crisis.

I played video games, met with friends, started drinking, going out... that kind of stuff. Probably more excessive than was good for me. But being of middle class upbringing, graduating and going to university came quite naturally and without much effort.

I decided to study business psychology. Psychology, because I was interested in the mind. Business, because I was still only the second generation in the middle class and knew that my mother was anxious about me being self-sufficient. When I started they asked me to pick a minor. Sociology sounded similar enough to psychology (phonetically) to spike my interest. A friend of mine started working at an energy trader. He asked me to join, because I wasn't bad at statistics. So I did that for two years before deciding to do a clinical master's in psychology and do some time in an institute for cognitive behavioral therapy. I did not enjoy that at all, so I stopped the vocational training and started looking for something else.

Someone I had gotten to know at the energy trader worked at your father's family office. They asked me to be a psychological liaison for his children, because... you know... no one is talking to him anymore. You were the second assignment actually. Simon was first. But he blocked all attempts to contact him and lawyered up to take care of his share. Okay, now I broke my NDA. You can blackmail me any way you want now.

After they reviewed my chat logs with you, they got the security guys to kick me out. They still owe me my last check. Threw me out of the company flat in New York too. There I was. Broke and homeless in New York. Work visa revoked. My mum sent me some cash for a ticket home. I stayed at her place for a while.

Now I work at a hospital in Lübeck, Germany. It's an administrative job. I've got a small flat. It's quite nice. There is a park close by. But I don't know anyone around here. So it goes.

Let's hear your story. Maybe we can think of something together.

Yours

Hans

06/07/24 KB to HL

Dear Hans,

thank you for sharing. I hope they didn't give you my file that you can use to fact check me.

So, my mother is from Russia. She worked as a hostess at some agency in Dallas. At some function she got to know the old man. Nine months later I was born. I don't want to think about that part any more than this. I had to go see him for my birthdays. My mother didn't have to work after that anymore though. He wanted her to be a full-time mother. She agreed. So, at least I didn't have to go to a boarding school like some of my half-siblings.

I grew up in Dallas, going to a school for rich kids. They basically let us do what we wanted to do in order not to get on the bad side of our parents. My mother didn't have any relatives, so we were kind of isolated. She had gone from hustling to survive to having a monthly income that allowed us to seem like we were rich enough for my school. The absence of financial stress made ours a relatively harmonious household. She took me to all the hobbies I wanted to do, read to me regularly etc. I had some friends at the school but mostly kept to myself. Reading was also a big thing for me.

But when the old man wanted something, we had to jump. So, sometimes I was spontaneously rushed to some event where he wanted to be photographed with all his children.

Things became shaky when I realized I am a girl when I was about 10. My mom tried to convince me to keep acting like a boy as long as I went to school. She was rightly concerned that a school in Texas wouldn't react nicely to me being myself. The old man reacted quite violently to it himself. When I arrived to a photoshoot in a dress he yelled at me and sent me home when I refused to change clothes. I wasn't invited to the next ones. He apparently thought that was a punishment. When he heard from the school that that wasn't enough, he talked to my mother. He must have told her that the money faucet would be turned off if I didn't behave. We had some bad fights after that. I must have been 13. What can I say? I won.

He didn't turn the faucet off, but I had to go to a "normal" highschool afterwards and we were downgraded in different ways. We had to move to an apartment. The hobbies weren't as expensive anymore as well. I didn't care. I still had books. My mom got used to the new situation quickly. She hated the other parents at the rich kid school anyway.

The old man was fuming though. I mean, take the L and annoy your other bajillion offspring. But no. He kept calling my mother, berating her for spoiling me with her liberal values. Over the years he came to really hate her. He once signed me up for conversion therapy without her or my consent. She didn't send me there but was really worried for some time. She must've thought he would kidnap me. Each day she drove me to highschool and picked me up directly in front of the entrance.

We managed to keep him at bay. I was able to transition early. He was never officially named my father on any papers. That way he could always stay in control of who gets what. On the other hand, that meant he couldn't keep my mother from making medical decisions for me. Lucky me.

Anyway, after school I went to a liberal arts college. Had a good time. And now I'm trying to do a fucking PhD in psychology. Don't know why, don't know how. Three published papers to go. I focus on the experience of transitioning in different social strata and milieus.

Well, suddenly, the old man wants to be in charge again. Sets you and your replacement on me. After having that interesting experience with you and the disappointment of you vanishing, I said fuck it and cut the cord. He went berserk. The faucet is closed shut and we suddenly had to find our own way. Mom is doing some accounting work. Luckily she used the last couple years to get a degree. Thank God for her anxiety. And I got a grant from my university. There won't be any vacations, but we're fine.

Soooo… I'm blanking. How did that particular exercise help us?

Love

Kate

Press clippings, June 8 to June 15

Billionaire's Trans Daughter in Scandalous 'Romance' with "Prince Hans": Leaked Memo Claims Exploitation and Control

By Coastal Star Exclusive Reporter

June 8, 2024

In a bombshell revelation, leaked documents expose Timothée Winslow, the estranged 23-year-old transgender daughter of tech tycoon Neo Winslow, is allegedly under the control of her much older "life coach," Hans Lieb. The memo, obtained exclusively by the *Coastal Star*, suggests the two have been involved in a disturbing, secretive relationship since early 2023, and it's only getting worse.

Timothée, now going by the name Kate Bokononova, shocked the world when she cut off ties with her father's multimillion-dollar fortune earlier this year. But, as the memo reveals, she may have jumped from one manipulator to another. Sources claim that Hans, 31, has completely infiltrated her life, taking control of her finances and even advising her to cut her father out completely.

Hans, who reportedly has no actual psychotherapeutic qualifications, is portrayed as the puppet master behind Kate's increasingly erratic decisions. According to insiders, his influence is so strong that some are speculating whether there's more to their "relationship" than just emotional support.

Neo Winslow, who has been vocal on social media, tweeting endlessly about Timothée's tragic fall from grace, seems powerless to stop what some see as a slow-motion car crash. The billionaire's tweets have hinted that his daughter has fallen prey to outside forces, with cryptic messages like, "When they leave home, they can be swept away by dark tides."

While Kate claims she's funding her PhD studies with a merit-based grant, sources say Hans has his hands all over her finances, raising serious questions about just how far his influence goes. Some close to the family worry she's spiraling into a dangerous dynamic with Hans exploiting her vulnerability.

Has Timothée traded one empire for a new puppet master? With the leaked memo raising eyebrows and tempers, it's only a matter of time before the truth about their twisted affair comes to light.

Stay with the Coastal Star for more explosive details on this unfolding drama.

Billionaire's Trans Daughter in Scandalous 'Affair' with Fraudster

By Capital Journal Investigations

June 9, 2024

In a shocking turn of events, a leaked memo reveals Timothée Winslow—now going by Kate Bokononova—is caught in a secretive and disturbing affair with 31-year-old so-called "life coach" Hans Lieb. The *Capital Journal* has learned that Hans, with no actual credentials, has been manipulating the vulnerable 23-year-old billionaire's daughter since 2023, controlling her finances and decisions while leading her away from her father's fortune.

Insiders say Hans has total influence over Kate, with friends fearing he's using her for personal gain. Some have even suggested the relationship is far more than professional, sparking rumors about their intimate involvement.

Neo Winslow, the tech mogul father, has been reduced to tweeting cryptic warnings as he watches helplessly. Is this the end of the Winslow dynasty?

Stay tuned for more as this explosive story unravels.

Neo Winslow Breaks Silence: Fraudster 'Has Stolen My Son'

By National Truth Reporter

June 15, 2024

Neo Winslow, the billionaire tech titan, has spoken out for the first time after a leaked memo exposed a troubling relationship between his transgender daughter, Timothée Winslow—now Kate Bokononova—and her life coach, Hans Lieb. The *National Truth* has uncovered explosive details that suggest "Prince" Hans, as he has been called in reports, has been controlling Kate's life, finances, and personal decisions since 2023.

In an exclusive interview, Neo didn't hold back:

"He's been manipulated, plain and simple. He walked away from everything I built for him, and I can't just stand by and watch."

Despite severing ties with her father's fortune, Kate remains under Hans's influence, with many close to her fearing the relationship is far more than just professional. Winslow's final words in the interview were chilling: "It's not over yet."

This shocking saga shows no signs of slowing down. Stay with the National Truth for more breaking updates.

E-mail conversation between h.lieb3@*****.com and kate.bokononova@***.edu continued

06/15/24 KB to HL

Dear Hans,

Holy shit. Are you alright? I'm used to the bullshit, but it must be something between weird and horrible for you.

Love

Kate

06/15/24 HL to KB

Dear Kate,

that's so weird, lmao. Luckily I'm in Germany and people don't really connect this with me. A colleague told me yesterday, "It's so weird that that guy from the yellow pages has the same name." And she only knows because she reads the worst kind of shit. So, no, I'm not bothered. I'm sorry for all the assholes dead naming you. So much fucking cruelty going around. I liked the Frozen wordplay though. Like you still have to wait for Kristof after I've shown I'm a charlatan. That's really clever.

So, let's carry on. I want to talk about the biographies. We're both definitely very much products of atomization. We both live in places where we don't feel any relation to our ancestors or our roots or anything. We're uprooted like all the other migrants. We're all marginal people (in Robert E. Parks original "marginal man"), stuck in the margins of cultures and worlds. We're foreigners, strangers. Trust is the hardest thing when you are strange to your surroundings and they are strange to you. We're the rootless cosmopolitans.

But we all are. Or at least so many of us are. That's something we can start from. We can start from scratch. How do we build trust? Trust can only be given freely, but it has to be honored. Otherwise it withers. Come to think of it, we have started building something by trusting each other and trying to honor the trust we have been given. How do we expand the circle then? Whom are we willing to trust? And how do we scale this up?

I'm always getting back to the point where my ambitions and sense of urgency clash with the reality where I am just the smallest fish in the pond. If only one billionaire recognized that they are on a path of destroying all they're building through their own actions, they could just implement what we're trying to conjure up. They could just build the community institutions that give people resonance: community kitchens, spaces to meet and cooperate, intercultural gardens, purposeful jobs in the city and the list goes on. But no, let's build another fucking yacht.

Sorry, I'm getting a drink now. Hope you have something more inspiring.

Love

Hans

06/16/24 KB to HL

Dear Hans,

I know that sentiment too well: "Why can this fucker not just do something productive for society instead of doing the most obviously evil and stupid shit?" I've been through the whole arguments for why I should suck up to him and try to use his funds for good. It doesn't work that way with a psychopathic narcissist and sadist. It's true, paradigms change at funerals not at conferences. Again: Marx not Lenin, Muslim Brotherhood not Hizb ut-Tahrir. We cannot start with getting power and then building the institutions. Öcalan got it right, when he said that institution-building must succeed outside the current system instead of trying to compete within the current system.

Okay, let's do this practically: What's the first thing we need for a democratized/participation society? I'd say we begin with the community kitchen-thing. Setting people free in the afternoon/evening to do stuff is essential. Give it to me GPT: $17,500.00 per month for a kitchen that serves 150 meals a day. That's roughly $4 a meal. So $120 a month each. If you add delivery it's $5 a meal or $150 a month. If you can use existing kitchens like school cafeterias, it's 50 cent less. Why the hell is this not a thing? I mean, add a nice app down the road where you can say which kitchen you are going to use in the evening, so you keep some flexibility in your life. In the app you might vote for meals. You could also have meetings where you decide democratically about suppliers and stuff.

First thing after securing initial funding is asking the neighborhood for their consent. Like, find an initial 30 to 50 households that are interested. Of course the question is: why would people want to do that in a country where many people have enough money to buy good food? The initial study would have to find out, what people want to do with their lives that they don't already do and try to bring that to the neighborhood. Like, maybe a lot of people want to meet in the evening and do something creative. You would have to have spaces for that too.

Why shouldn't this work?

Love

Kate

06/17/24 HL to KB

Dear Kate,

yeah, bring that energy. I wonder how you would fund that in the US. In Germany there are many federal and EU funds for that kind of thing. As far as I know in the US you are much more reliant on private donations, right? Being viewed as someone who is under the influence of a guru is probably not very helpful for that. Maybe we should take a step back and think about the aspect of humble leadership.

To organize a community, to make it trust you, you have to be a person who has a real connection—deep ties. Gramsci talked about organic intellectuals as people who—in contrast to classical intellectuals—came from the working class and were able to understand what it needed to flourish. They didn't push their grand ideas—conceived from tabula rasa—but instead elevate the needs of their people. But as I already noted: there are no communities with prevalent deep ties anymore. Everyone's a stranger. A couple of weeks back I reread an article from a left-wing foundation with a reconceptualization of the organic intellectual: the mediating intellectual who is a "marginal man". It's a person who walks between the different social worlds of a community. So, while our own strangeness is not a hindrance to building institutions, it might not be the right kind of strangeness to be a leader.

When you talked about doing a preliminary study, I had to think of Severine Autessere and her writing about making freedom through democratic processes. Maybe our role could be more of something like a consultant. I mean not in the usual sense of lowbrow classical intellectuals who try to implement their business school ideas in every organization without knowing the least bit of what they're actually doing. But maybe more like (I know that sounds silly, but I can't think of a better metaphor right now) John the Baptists who are looking for the next prophet who is actually able to inspire people to follow them? I hope you understand what I'm getting at. Maybe we can explain to people that they are organic intellectuals and can act as ethical geniuses to elevate people and build the future. Maybe do something similar to CANVAS and recruit mediating intellectuals to build parallel institutions?

Looking forward to your answer.

Love

Hans

06/20/24 KB to HL

Dear Hans,

I know you aren't following that closely but Kendrick just had his Juneteenth concert. He established himself as the leader of the West Coast—bringing all the different LA gangs on stage and having Dr Dre introduce the first of like six plays of Not Like Us in a row. Just noting that here to continue developing my theory of Kendrick the Prophet.

Back to our discussion: I do not dislike your idea of developing upcoming talent for the participation society. But it probably shows more about your character than you intended. I say this from a place of love and appreciation: you're not a main character. You prefer the shadows where you do not have to act, but can observe and council. That's a good thing for what it is. But I'm not sure that going around telling people to do the work is going to start anything.

But that's not me. As Kendrick told Drake: don't go around sneak dissing but fight openly. Like, be the change you want to see in the world. For my part, I'm not going to take the abuse lying down anymore. I think I'm going to put up a more public fight against the old man. The tweets in the last months have been the worst. And the whole conservative ecosystem is lapping it up, making me a prop in their disgusting culture war.

I might have some fun for a change.

Watch me

Kate

06/30/24 HL to KB

Dear Kate,

damn, you delivered. You just showed that the whole world has been waiting for you to tear him a second one. It seems like you know exactly the buttons to push. What are you going to do with your newfound fame? Do you have a plan?

Like, are you going to leverage your status as a kind of whistleblower to show the Machiavellianism of capital? Are you going to pivot into media? Can you maybe harness some of the support to deliver on your ideas? Like, how do you connect your public persona to the project?

Looking forward to your next move.

Love

Hans

07/01/24 KB to HL

Dear Hans,

I don't know. This is a whole new level of fucking crazy. I mean, Contrapoints is following me. I think I might just faint.

On the other hand I'm getting some additional weird stares in the department. I just told the richest guy in the world to fuck himself and he reacted with a meltdown. What the hell? I knew he was a fragile character, but not like that. I might've pushed the wrong

guys narcissist buttons. He is sending his bloodhounds for me. Like, I can barely use this account anymore because of all the disgusting emails. I hope I can block them all.

I'm in a fucking shark tank and you're talking strategy. I don't know. I have no idea what I'm doing. You tell me, what am I going to do with this whole fucking situation? Go.

Drowning

Kate

07/02/24 HL to KB

Dear Kate,

I'm sorry. You're right. This is crazy. Hope you're coping.

You're doing something important though. Changing the public discourse is an immense task and you're doing a great deal for teens in a similar situation. The question now is, do you want to continue focusing on trans issues solely or make a broader statement about how to implement the necessary steps to get to a participation society? The problem might be that people only trust you on the first issue but not on others. There might also be a difference in target groups.

I am not a PR guy, so take everything I say with a grain of salt, but I think you can manage to pivot if you're giving yourself enough time and plan ahead. Keep doing what you're doing right now. If I can support you in any way, tell me. In the long run, we can make up a strategy for pivoting towards a broader advocacy.

The first step is to make sure, you can survive this. Due to your being who you are, there isn't really an exit option—except for maybe leaving modern society behind. So, you need to have the right support network. You have to be careful with your finances, who you are talking to, and what you are doing in public. You might want to also have a team to plan your current social media strategy. I guess it's better I'm not involved with financial stuff and so on after those articles in June. Who knows who will dig this stuff up.

Do you know what I'm going to do? I will write to the guys from the convivialist international. Maybe they are interested in starting an initiative to bring CSKs to communities.

Love

Hans

07/12/24 KB to HL

Dear Hans,

I appreciate your getting active and trying to reach out. Let's see if the conviviliasts are interested in more than just debating amongst themselves.

I fear I'm becoming a terminally online-type poster. After a while you lose all sense of perspective. Just answering fucking dipshits who try to drag my name all the time—trying to garner favor with the old man. "Senpai, look at me." It's disgusting. And I should really get some writing done. The paper is due next week. Only two to go after that. And I desperately need a glass of wine.

I haven't had time to read or think about anything interesting in a while too. Just posting or crunching numbers.

What are you up to anyway? Still working at that hospital?

Love

Kate

07/14/24 HL to KB

Dear Kate,

It's good to hear from you. Sounds tough though. Don't burn yourself out. You're way too young for that. I hope you're getting some sleep and have some friends around you.

I actually did something interesting. I wrote an application for a project. Okay, so, I work for a hospital that is part of the red cross. And researching CSKs I found out that you can get money for community projects if it has something to do with integration of immigrants. So I just wrote something and send it there for the red cross (I asked them if it's okay of course). So, now I'm waiting for whether I can get some funding for a CSK that employs refugees and feeds people in need in a neighborhood in Lübeck. Maybe that's a start. Let's find out who has built a worldwide network of CSKs first. ;)

Anyhow, now I have to do the initial study to find out who is willing to participate and what kind of activities I can make people participate in during their newfound free time. I want to talk to some music associations to find out whether they might be willing to start some lay musical thing in the evening.

The conviviliasts reacted as expected: not at all. All talk, no action.

I enjoy your posts a lot. Keep it going.

Love

Hans

07/23/24 KB to HL

Dear Hans,

That's amazing. I love it. Keep me posted. When will you know whether you got the funds? At the same time it sounds like a daunting task. Like, now you're responsible for that thing. I know you're up to it, but wow.

I kind of want to know if I could do something like that as well... But, oh well, I should really finish this fucking PhD.

Can you send me the application, so I can see what you're going to do?

Love

Kate

07/24/24 HL to KB

Dear Kate,

Here's the translated application.

Love

Hans

Project application "Tägliche Tafel"

Application for Community-Supported Kitchen Project: "Tägliche Tafel" (Daily Table)

Project Summary

"Tägliche Tafel" is a community-supported kitchen project in Lübeck offering daily meals prepared by refugees for the local community. This initiative promotes social cohesion, cultural exchange, and empowerment by creating a welcoming space for residents and refugees to connect over meals. With refugees as daily chefs, the project not only provides nutritious food but also cultivates mutual respect and understanding. A full-time coordinator will manage daily operations, ensuring smooth logistics, community engagement, and volunteer support.

Project Goals

1. Strengthen Social Cohesion: Address social fragmentation through daily shared meals that foster relationships and a supportive, close-knit community.

2. Encourage Humility and Mutual Support: Reflecting practices in traditional societies, the project instills humility and collective responsibility, as participants collaborate in cooking, serving, and cleaning up, encouraging respect and connection.

3. Empower Refugees: Refugees serve as daily chefs, showcasing their cultural heritage and culinary skills, building confidence, and fostering positive perceptions within the community.

4. Promote Sustainability and Local Economy: Using seasonal, locally-sourced ingredients helps reduce food waste, support regional farmers, and promote sustainable practices.

Community Need and Social Impact

With an aging population and increasing social divides, Lübeck faces challenges in fostering integration and a sense of belonging, especially for refugees. "Tägliche Tafel" offers daily opportunities to connect over shared meals, helping to break down social barriers, foster trust, and create an inclusive community. This project addresses isolation and fragmentation by facilitating daily interactions and meaningful connections.

The "Tägliche Tafel" project would be particularly impactful in Lübeck's St. Lorenz Nord neighborhood. Here's why this location is ideal:

1. Diverse Population: St. Lorenz Nord is known for its cultural diversity, with a higher percentage of immigrant and refugee populations. Establishing the project here would directly engage these communities, making it easier for refugee chefs to connect with a familiar cultural base while also inviting long-term residents to join and build cross-cultural bonds.

2. Existing Social Needs: This neighborhood has areas facing economic challenges, where residents could benefit from affordable, nutritious meals. The project would address food security concerns while offering a welcoming space for social engagement, fostering a sense of shared responsibility and community.

3. Strong Potential for Community Engagement: St. Lorenz Nord already has a range of social initiatives, from community centers to local associations, which could support and partner with the project. These connections could provide access to additional resources like venues, volunteers, and outreach, increasing the project's impact and sustainability.

4. Central and Accessible: Located near Lübeck's center, St. Lorenz Nord offers good public transportation links, making it accessible for participants from other neighborhoods. This accessibility can help draw a mix of visitors, further enriching the cultural exchange.

Starting "Tägliche Tafel" in St. Lorenz Nord would allow the project to reach those who would benefit most while fostering a community spirit rooted in inclusion, resilience, and mutual support.

Project Activities

- Daily Community Meals: Held at a set location, with dishes prepared by refugee chefs. The daily format encourages routine and fosters stronger bonds, making it easy for residents to participate regularly.

- Cultural Exchange and Storytelling: Chefs and participants share traditions, recipes, and stories, encouraging cultural appreciation and understanding.

- Sustainability Practices: The project prioritizes local, seasonal ingredients to support the environment and the regional economy.

- Full-Time Coordinator: A dedicated coordinator will oversee daily operations, including volunteer management, supply logistics, budget oversight, and community engagement. The coordinator will ensure consistency in the project's impact, manage relationships with local suppliers, and facilitate storytelling and exchange sessions.

Evaluation and Impact Assessment

Success will be measured through daily attendance tracking, volunteer engagement, and participant feedback. Surveys will assess changes in social cohesion, perceptions, and feelings of belonging among participants. We expect the project to foster a welcoming, inclusive environment in Lübeck that is rich in humility, mutual support, and community spirit.

Budget (Based on Daily Operations)

- Venue Rental and Utilities: EUR 25,000

- Daily Ingredients and Supplies: EUR 60,000

- Full-Time Coordinator: EUR 40,000

- Staff and Volunteer Support: EUR 25,000

- Outreach and Community Engagement: EUR 7,000

- Miscellaneous Expenses: EUR 5,000

- Total: EUR 162,000

- Federal grant: EUR 70,000

- Contributions of participants: EUR 70,000

- DRK funds: EUR 22,000

E-mail conversation between h.lieb3@*****.com and kate.bokononova@***.edu continued

07/25/24 KB to HL

Dear Hans,

Wow, that sounds really reasonable. I feel like a teenager acting out in comparison to that. I really need to do something grown up with my time. Maybe I should actually take up one of the podcast offers. I mean they mostly want me to talk about trans issues with… someone. I don't know most of them. Still waiting for Contrapoints though.

So, I wondered, being trans is like being a marginal person in some way, right? Like, you're not only between worlds, but you've experienced the worst of both worlds. Being treated like a boy and feeling horrible and being a woman and being treated horribly. It must be possible to use this in some way. I mean look at the art trans people are doing. Matrix, Margaret Killjoy's books, Kat Blaque… Like, there's something so… Do you know what I mean? Free. No, I mean, there's this knowledge of fluidity. This knowledge of a different world being possible.

Well, okay, probably that's something that neurodivergent and non-white people have too. But you catch my drift, like, it's possible to increase the self-knowledge of this community to enable their potential for class struggle more easily. That reminds me of Brave New World, where the people who recognize the uninhabitability of this society are the ones who are outside because they are too smart, underprivileged but not down-trodden, or coming from a different kind of society. I'm not sure that he got those groups correctly but I like this idea of there being structural positions from which the energy for change comes.

So, the fringes are where progress comes from. But they're never strong enough on their own. How can we then build the coalitions we need? I don't know. I'm rambling.

Hoping for your insight.

Love

Kate

08/09/24 HL to KB

Dear Kate,

That's a really interesting question: Can we find a meta-narrative that marries progressivism and conservatism in order to build bigger coalitions? It sounds like a contradiction, but think about the expanding circle of Peter Singer: progress means taking existing values and applying them to larger circles. Like, political rights were first fought for as bourgeois rights, but were then expanded to white men's rights, then white

people's rights, then citizen's rights. (I know that's a horrible simplification and we have not yet achieved political rights as human rights.) I think you can look at this process as one of progression, but also as a way of saying again and again: let's secure what we have achieved in the face of minority groups fighting for their rights.

Conservatives like stability. Well, stability is not achieved through resilience but through antifragility. (Bear with me, this is going to require some context.) The philosopher Nassim Taleb developed the concept because of his dissatisfaction with the pair of terms fragility and resilience. In his view, these do not really represent opposites. Fragile is something that breaks when exposed to shocks; resilient is something that can withstand them. According to Taleb, however, one would now also need a term for things that not only withstand shocks but also benefit from them. Antifragility can best be understood with the help of examples: Muscles are antifragile because they become stronger over time with deliberate overuse. So are viruses, which eventually become virtually immune to all therapy through all attempts to destroy them. Evolution itself is a fundamentally antifragile process. The mechanism of selection of the best adapted leads to creatures that are always better suited to their niches.

Antifragile cohesion presents itself, on the one hand, as an aggregate cohesion orientation in the population that cannot be reduced by external influences but is strengthened by shocks. In addition, there are interpersonal and institutional relationships that are strengthened by stress. At the same time, there is also a need for institutions that use crises to get better rather than undermine cohesion in non-linear ways (cf. moral panic vs. democratic iteration). These three aspects can probably best be summarized as follows: Life forms with antifragile cohesion are able to learn. After surviving a shock, they must change their structure to be better prepared for future shocks. This change must be progressive in character. It must not fall behind the previous level of problem solving. For progressive solutions to be reliably found, the learning process must be rational.

If you google „rational learning", you will first find references to Bayesianism, which describes rational learning as updating probabilities of occurrence for different possibilities. For certain domains, this is true. For example, Bayesianism has had remarkable success in finding submarines at the bottom of the ocean. And many machine learning tools are also based on Bayesian methods. Somewhat more realistically, one can understand the development of virtuosity in, say, piano playing as a process of physical incremental optimization of a sense of timing, touch, and so on.

However, as Daniel Kahneman points out, it is particularly difficult or even impossible to learn rationally if the subject area has no regularities. Learning from history is repeatedly mentioned as a desideratum, but in some respects it is almost impossible because there are no (or only statistical) regularities in the course of history. We are too often dealing with unprecedented events. Even the close study of circular flow models à la Peter Turchin does not enable us to anticipate wars or election results. The situation is

similar in all social sciences. Nassim Taleb puts this difficulty in terms of fat tails of black swans. This means that an approximation to the actual probabilities for rare phenomena with dire consequences is impossible by experience-driven updating of one's own expectations, because their probabilities have no mean value and an infinite variance. What this means mathematically, one does not have to be able to understand exactly. You can roughly imagine it like this: The larger groups of people I randomly select, the more accurately I can determine, for example, the average height of the population. But this is not true for variables like personal financial wealth: if I have all but the three richest people in my sample, my estimated mean will be way off the actual value. If I had all the people in my sample (or then just no sample at all), I would of course have the correct value. But future events can never be part of my sample.

Flyvbjerg shows that this problem applies to many areas that have huge implications for the stability of the established order: Earthquakes, cybercrime, wars, pandemics, large-scale IT projects, floods, bankruptcies, forest fires, and power outages. So, it is precisely the most fatal events that are the worst to learn from. If a government thinks, „I survived the last pandemic with my strategy, then I will also survive the next one," then it will eventually fail quite fatally and many people will die.

So how should we protect ourselves against such events so that we can learn from them? Antifragility is never free. As a hedge fund manager, Taleb himself advocated an investment strategy designed to hedge against black swans: he bet against the market and lost money until the next financial crisis occurred. Until the Black Swan, the strategy seems crazy; after that, perfectly reasonable. In less dramatic terms than Taleb's, this approach is called the precautionary principle. Before explaining this concept, however, it is necessary to clarify how social worlds, and hence societies, can learn.

To understand how social worlds learn, it is helpful to conceptualize them with philosopher Rahel Jaeggi as life forms. Life forms are defined in two ways. Once descriptively: they are „inert bundles of social practices" —this is also how social worlds could be described. From a normative perspective, they are, on the other hand, constituted by moral norms that can be interpreted as a level of problem solving. The characterization as an inert bundle of social practices states that a particular way of life is characterized by the fact that certain practices are repeatedly used in combination.

In school, dictations, tests, exams, papers, and oral exams are used to check performance. Teachers give lectures, have students work on worksheets in silent work, and have texts read aloud to impart knowledge. The lessons last 45 minutes. There are breaks in between. All these practices, and more, make up school today.

The fact that most members of a way of life experience these practices as already set makes it difficult to imagine their change. They are not only habits, but also often legitimized mythically (in the sense of a fictional narrative).

There is an expectation attached to school examination forms that they can be used to assess whether students will later be qualified for demanding jobs. Associated with this are myths about a stable intelligence quotient, its influence on future performance and verifiability through school examinations.

In addition, they represent a historical level of problem solving: Every form of life has always been preceded by other forms of life in which practices existed that solved a certain problem of action. However, they were not suitable for solving newly arising problems, which is why new practices had to be developed which solved these problems and which are now applied.

With the solution of historical problems, however, life forms have also set themselves an implicit claim not to fall behind the current problem-solving level. The way in which reproductive tasks are distributed in a family, for example, is to be understood as a solution strategy with regard to the problems of a previous family constellation. The patch-work family addresses the problems that have arisen for the bourgeois nuclear family as a result of the change in values. From this can be derived the idea that successful changes in the configuration of life forms can be understood as progress in the sense of a rational learning process. Important to this idea is the distinction between first-order problems (which confront a life form from the outside, such as natural disasters) and second-order problems (which consist in the life form's inability to learn, such as the inability to designate floodplains despite repeated flood disasters). Second-order problems stand in the way of progress (i.e., the ability of a life form to adapt its practices to avert expectable first-order problems).

Another property of life forms is that certain expectations are set with them. For example, each member of a family expects the family to address their reproductive needs. If a family is not able to meet these needs, it can be said that this family does not live up to its concept: „The parents do not take care of their children. That is not a family!"

Lack of cohesion can be seen as a problem of certain forms of life to live up to their concept or, in other words, to meet their own moral standards. The form of cohesion differs depending on the form of life: A market creates cohesion insofar as it makes it possible to distribute goods and services according to the price mechanism. A church creates cohesion insofar as it commits its members to shared norms of action.

The norms that guide coexistence in forms of life are moral in nature. This means that they are constitutive for the forms of life: If they were not followed, one could not speak of them as being precisely that form of life. At the same time, they are functional: they are the rules of the game of the form of life.

Life forms now learn by looking for novel solutions to problems in the face of the crisis that hinders the normal functioning of the life form. To what extent this learning

succeeds, Jaeggi wants to be evaluated on the basis of the rationality of the learning process.

The distinction between irrational and rational learning seems to me to lie on a continuum that lies between moral panics and democratic iterations:

Michael Eversmann and Jason Bird, citing the inventor of the concept of moral panic, Stanley Cohen, describe in a 2016 article how this analytical framework is used to understand how exaggerated representations of and concerns about social problems and deviance inform public opinion and social policy. First, a group or situation is defined as problematic, he said. This is then hyped up in the media. A so-called folk devil, i.e., a scapegoat, is invented to whom all kinds of negative characteristics can be attributed. The preference for emphasizing individualistic, moralistic behaviors over structural societal factors then leads to reactionary, often punitive measures that promote lasting institutional, political, and cultural changes, societal injustice, discrimination, and often the criminalization of the target group or its actions. Criminologist Scott Bonn emphasizes that there is a disconnect between concern and the objective threat. Concern also fluctuates accordingly and at some point, decreases rapidly.

The classic paradigmatic case of moral panic is the witch hunt, which, as Silvia Federici impressively describes in Caliban and the Witch, systematically drove the displacement of women into the domestic sphere. It hardly needs to be explained that there were or are no witches in the sense of the Hexenhammer. Nevertheless, witch trials were initiated repeatedly over the centuries when the responsibility for emergencies was to be shifted to a scapegoat.

The best-known modern use of the term is the satanic panic of the 1980s. At that time, a conservative counterrevolution coincided with newly acquired freedoms, pop cultural events, and actual crimes to produce a hair-raising conspiracy narrative that mass satanic ritual abuse (rape, mutilation, and murder) of children was being carried out by teachers, child educators, and others with supervisory responsibilities. On the one hand, this implied the intent of the conservative moral majority to push back the civil rights movement. New social movements had won civil rights for Black people and women in the decades before. These included, in particular, the right to abortion. On the other hand, the increasing prevalence of individual psychotherapy and the strengthening of children's and victims' rights also played into this mix. In parallel, The Exorcist had given rise to a newly awakened interest in exorcisms, which actually led to an expansion of the practice in the 1970s. At the same time, massive child abuse continued to be prevalent in the 1970s and 1980s in the Catholic Church and the Boy Scouts, among others.

The extent of this moral panic can be gauged by the fact that actual (mind you, of course, innocent) people went to prison because of these stories. Another significant role was

played by the widespread legitimacy of psychotherapeutic methods that were supposed to uncover repressed memories. It has since been demonstrated that the use of these methods can implant memories rather than uncover them. Nevertheless, nowadays there are still convinced Satanist hunters and a new popularity within the Qanon conspiracy theories.

But moral panic is not limited to alleged Satanism. Criminologist Scott Bonn was able to show that moral panic following the September 11, 2001 attacks was purposefully directed by presidential rhetoric to generate support for the Iraq War. This is an interesting case because the panic was largely fueled by a government-level conspiracy. Colin Powell's infamous speech to the United Nations was a key component in generating public approval within the United States.

Literary scholar Adrian Daub shows that the current Cancel Culture and Wokeness debate is a global moral panic that fantasizes a left-liberal threat to free speech in various countries based on individual examples of actual performance bans and deplatforming campaigns (mostly on U.S. college campuses). But this includes a liberal media public that denies even the correct examples for fear of the consequences. It is particularly striking that the argumentation of both the warners and the appeasers has not changed since the debates about political correctness in the 1990s. Moral panics often boil the same soup over and over again without the cooks having any real interest in spooning it out.

The paradigmatic cases are thus characterized by the fact that the events are largely fabricated. When there is an underlying event, there is a shift from the real crimes (abuse by the Catholic Church) to a scapegoat or folk devil (Satanists).

In Stanley Cohen's original process model of moral panic, the mass media are at the center. The demands of the attention economy lead them to exaggerate and distort the original event or the characteristics of the affected group. They predict, in a second step, a worsening of the situation and, thirdly, produce a symbolism of threat. While these processes still take place within the framework of normal journalism, moral entrepreneurs additionally appear who exaggerate the threat in moralizing language and exploit it for their own goals. Cohen mentions here not only feature writers but also bishops and politicians. The expressions of opinion by moral entrepreneurs give the sensationalist reporting an additional moralizing weight. The addressees are representatives of central power who are in a position to implement the demands of the moral entrepreneurs. The role of the media in moral panics can thus hardly be exaggerated. It is they who do the initial framing of the underlying event and thus predetermine the extent to which exploitation by interest groups is possible.

The relationship between cohesion and moral panics is extremely complex. By intensifying the segregation or marginalization of social groups, a moral panic weakens cohesion initially at the discursive level, thereby also mediating it at the individual level

and, in the long term, at the institutional level: Moral panics have an extremely corrosive effect on cohesion. On the other hand, however, they can only act on the weak points of cohesion.

The concept of moral panic suggests a circular understanding of history that seems to negate any progress. Public scandalizations, however, can also be understood as a method of how modernity reflects itself. With philosopher Seyla Benhabib, media debates around controversial events, individuals, and groups can be seen as processes of self-understanding that are necessary for sociocultural change. Benhabib herself cites the debates over the wearing of headscarves in France and Germany as examples. She speaks of democratic iterations, using this concept of the French philosopher Jacques Derrida to emphasize that each debate, while seemingly repetitive, has a new quality. According to Jacques Derrida, when one rereads a text, something new happens because one approaches the text with a different prior understanding. A horizon leveling as envisioned by hermeneuticists is not necessarily to be expected, but there is something new with the potential for progress. A social iteration may seem as monotonous as reading the same text over and over, but something new is happening. And the debate will iterate until society reaches a point that allows most people to pretend that this issue has been dealt with so that they can move on to another topic of excitement.

At first glance, the two concepts view the same phenomena through different analytical lenses: While moral panic describes an emotional process, the latter, framed as democratic iteration, seems to be a rational negotiation of political interests. However, this seems to be more an artifact of particular cases, moral panic in some areas and democratic iteration in others. The Satanic Panic, on the other hand, cannot be described as a democratic iteration. It is probably more useful to speak of two ideal types, which usually occur in mixed forms. What they have in common is that they allow an event to be used as a window of opportunity. In their processes and consequences, however, they differ. While a democratic iteration always contains the possibility of progress in the sense of opening up for chances for a better coexistence, a moral panic only scandalizes distorted problems and scapegoats. Since they cannot solve problems, they always contain a certain potential for violence.

Consider next how the precautionary principle enhances the rationality of the learning process. Sociologist Michel Callon and colleagues emphasize that in situations of uncertainty (as opposed to those in which risks, i.e., hazards with a known probability of occurrence, must be dealt with), the precautionary principal must be applied. This is opposed by the prevention principal, which applies when risks have been identified. The precautionary principle applies when potential hazards become diffuse. It does not consist of trying to completely eliminate uncertainty by refraining from any action that has not been scientifically established as safe. Nor does it involve assessing all risks before acting. But it does mean, as Hans Jonas put it, taking bad forecasts more

seriously than good ones. Measured action, as envisioned by Callon, combines cautious framing of the problem with immediate action. Accordingly, economically sustainable precautions should be taken against the possible danger.

The application of the precautionary principle, according to Callon, requires its own institutions. Precaution, he said, is only possible if there is an empirical or institutional system of vigilance, that is, a more or less formalized system of socio-technical precautions that allows the collection, recording and aggregation of information that, although scattered and heterogeneous, can reveal a broader collective problem. This, he said, was the point at which hazards were detected, the pre-alarm phase in the true sense.

Life forms with such institutional systems practice what Callon calls attention-vigilance. They are aware of the possibility of danger and collect data to turn uncertainty into risk. He points out that these institutions must be sustained by hybrid networks in which both experts and laypeople work together. In this context, systematic data collection and interpretation by experts are often triggered and driven by lay people's concern for their own safety.

According to Callon, the assessment of the danger and the selection of measures to prevent it must also take place in such an interaction between experts and laypersons. If actors are not involved, this can have fatal consequences. On the one hand, important perspectives on the hazard can then be lost, so that it is incorrectly assessed. On the other hand, it can lead to problems later on: The ignored stakeholders may not accept the solution found and torpedo its implementation.

Callon contrasts the classic decision-making model, in which a single actor, democratically or otherwise legitimized, makes a decision about a course of action made irreversible by scientific or political authority, with a model in which different and diverse actors meet repeatedly to conduct preliminary explorations and experiments, the results of which remain reversible and are always open to new stakeholders emerging as the process unfolds.

He openly admits that it seems crazy to rely on dialogic democracy in moments of acute crisis. It is precisely then that seemingly quick decisions are needed. Regardless of the urgency, however, he says, it remains the case that all activities involved in preparedness, such as assessing and expanding available information, defining populations at risk, weighing the costs and benefits of dangerous activities, choosing targeted measures, and so on, require broad discussion. This meant, he said, that the procedures that would be adopted to organize the hybrid forums would have to be well identified and function smoothly so that they could be implemented quickly and efficiently.

Hybrid forums are a central concept in Callon's work, referring to those arenas that emerge when a problem produces overflows, dynamics of dissolution both in terms of

uncontrollable (financial as well as social and health) costs to people and the environment (black swans) and in the form of public outrage and stakeholder multiplication. Overflows simply cannot be worked away by expert panels and governments. They must be taken seriously in their political dimension and allowed to unfold. Rather than suppressing them, Callon says, hybrid forums must be well prepared and kept on standby for rapid response in the event of a crisis. For the metaphorical floods, then, flood plains must be secured in advance.

This means not only operating a fixed crisis team, but creating a hybrid public arena that can contain and channel overflows through procedures. This arena must be flexible enough to accommodate new stakeholders but should be resistant enough not to be overwhelmed by organized campaigns. The troll attacks found in public hearings today, both on and offline, must not be too disruptive to the work of the forums. However, dealing with such irritations can at the same time serve as training for the forums and make them stronger.

One point on which Callon and Taleb agree is that precaution is not the same as prediction. Taleb's starting point is his idea that black swans cannot be predicted by statistical analysis anyway. The only kinds of statistical forecasts to which he attaches any value are forecasts based on Poissonian distributions, which can roughly determine the probability of events. But even these he allows to be valid only on the basis of static processes such as the movement of continental plates. The probability of large earthquakes and volcanic eruptions can thus be predicted relatively well for a period of time. In contrast, he has only bitter derision for Steven Pinker's predictions on the development of violence, which in his opinion do not allow to assume a static probability distribution.

Callon, too, has little love for computer simulations, which he accuses of building houses of cards out of assumptions that build on each other, which ultimately could hardly help guide political action. Given that movements like Fridays for Future in particular rely heavily on simulative science, the statement seems absurd. But climate science in particular has managed to link its scientific activity with activism. Many climate scientists engage in hybrid forums and are also politically successful only insofar as they engage with the demands of the climate movement. What is important to both is that preparedness means being ready to react quickly rather than anticipating the future.

Callon emphasizes that precaution is both a process of knowledge production and an exploration of identities that ultimately make up the collective. Its task, however, is not to define the boundaries of what is acceptable and what is unacceptable.

For hybrid forums to function, a strong democratic culture is needed. On the one hand, it must be strong in the sense that it sees conflict as an opportunity to find progressive solutions. On the other hand, it must also be defensible. Defensible democracy is often

equated with defending an Overton Window that is considered acceptable, if necessary with the means of the rule of law. However, the mechanisms of the rule of law are quite ineffective unless it is recognized that extreme groups increasingly rely on dog whistles and segregated language. Anti-human mobilization cannot simply be banned because it often takes place in a gray area. In addition to better regulation of social media and mass media, more effective mobilization of the entire population is necessary to remove its breeding ground: Feelings of being at the mercy of others and resulting anomie on the one hand, the egoistic profit motive (and correspondingly different anomie) on the other. Democratic culture works only as a culture of participation. If all people are included in political processes instead of being excluded from the decision-making process through social closure, then extreme positions have a tough time dominating political spaces. What is needed first and foremost is an ascetic relinquishment of power.

If progress is to be made, however, lasting lessons must also be learned from the shocks. Institutional learning, then, is not just about using memory institutions (museums, archives, libraries), but about building institutional memory and using it to inform future decisions. Institutional learning goes beyond progress in the sense of reaching new levels of problem solving. Memory institutions must be used in a way that makes the problem solutions found transferable to emerging problems.

Flyvbjerg provides guidance on how social science knowledge should be prepared to optimize transferability to other contexts. He argues for the utility of thick case narratives, which, unlike statistical measures, demonstrate the context of particular responses to more general problems and act like a virtual reality for the reader, who can gain a deeper understanding of the conditions of a problem solution by immersing themselves in the story. In this way, Flyvbjerg argues, reading narratives can achieve a certain virtuosity in problem solving that would not be attainable by absorbing thinner information.

What is meant is not ad hoc narratives or myths, as described by Berger and Luckmann as typical of institutions whose origin stories become increasingly mystified over time. Stories need to be carefully constructed and scrutinized according to scholarly and journalistic standards. In particular, a precise description of the context is important in order to make it comprehensible when an intervention has had the desired effect.

An example can be taken here from the approach of constructive journalism, which sets itself the task of presenting proposals for solutions rather than merely reporting facts (although this does not, of course, call into question the importance of classic journalism). However, this genre has yet to take root and develop recognized standards. While sometimes practiced as positive journalism that seeks to tell positive stories about things that „worked," the pole of solutions journalism, which seeks to highlight viable solutions to social problems, is more in line with the desideratum described here. The criticism leveled at this approach, that the problems are too complex and the proposed solutions necessarily too simplistic, fails to recognize that the alternative to

such an approach is the absence of public debate about how to solve social problems. Constructive journalism does not close off debates but opens them up.

Corresponding to constructive journalism on the side of the academic social sciences are the discussions about public sociology and phronetic social science. Public sociology positions itself between critical theory and applied social research. It is said to be less esoteric than critical theory and less dependent on corporations and administrations than applied sociology. It does not merely question society's goals or recommend means to achieve stated goals, but opens dialogue about those goals and asks: what should we do? Flyvbjerg's approach of placing phronesis (i.e., practical wisdom) above episteme (i.e., abstract knowledge) aims in a similar direction.

These approaches in journalism and academia can serve as models for shaping hybrid publics that keep progressive and cohesive ideas present and applied when the opportunity arises.

Experimentation is the gold standard in science for gaining knowledge. Viewing governance as experimentation, John Law and Karel Williams argue, learning can take four different forms: Learning, they say, can take place within the framework already used to assess outcomes. It could take the form of adapting the framework so that it could fix problems that have become apparent within its parameters. Learning could, third, take the form of playing with the framework. And finally, learning can take the form of large-scale reframing.

The biggest problem they see is when policymakers nevertheless cling to a framework in the face of the failure of an experiment. Such an inability to learn (Jaeggi calls this a second-order problem) always looms when there appears to be only one legitimate framework. Law and Williams give as an example the assumption that political problems can only be solved by deregulating „the market." That this assumption is not true should have been obvious after 30 years at the latest. The TINA principle is nevertheless upheld.

To avoid second-order problems, it makes sense to rely on many different approaches to solutions from the outset. Pluralism makes people antifragile. When it comes to cohesion, this means allowing and encouraging a variety of ways of life and arenas. Redundancies should not be seen as a waste of resources, but as safety nets.

The connection between humility and antifragility seems to me to be an important lever for legitimizing progressive politics in the republic of the elderly. At present, the conservatism of predominantly older voters seems to be the primary obstacle to progressive projects such as the energy transition and more liberal immigration. To overcome this resistance, a different way of thinking about conservatism and progress is needed:

A life in dignity is possible for each and every one of us only if everyone lives in dignity. If I force my counterpart to do something, then she or he cannot meet me with dignity

because her or his freedom of choice is curtailed. Domination is not a triumph but a tragedy, because we can only look our counterpart in the eye, but not those at our feet. The recognition I receive is fake and I cannot trust anyone because those below me are only trying to eliminate me or take my place. Even if they collaborate, it is only to be absorbed into the group of rulers. All this makes me a lesser, less free person. Only in democratic and deliberative structures can we recognize each other.

At the same time, it is these structures that establish antifragility by means of the precautionary principle. We need to rehearse and train them permanently so that they are ready when we need them and protect what we have. That is ultimately the basic idea of conservatism: protect values. But protecting values cannot mean not changing (or even trying to revive a mythical past state of the world). As the Black Queen says, „You have to run as fast as you can to stay in the same place. If you want to go somewhere else, you have to run at least twice as fast." To protect real values, we must give up false privileges and cooperate on an equal footing.

Let us revisit a core theme of conservatism: the family. Its importance as the nucleus of society can only be preserved if it changes. If a family no longer lives up to its concept, it must evolve. The patchwork family is a completely normal reality. Its normalization and further development into communities of care can give society more structure in Eric Hoffer's sense. In its function, it resembles the extended family of the pre-modern era rather than the bourgeois nuclear family. For conservatives who see society as an extension of the family order, such a revitalization of the family should be a dream come true. (Unless it is actually about securing narrow, myopic privileges rather than stabilizing peaceful coexistence).

If one wants to encounter conservatism as an intellectual project, then the Irish politician Edmund Burke seems a good guarantor. In his Reflections on the Revolution in France, he elaborated the key features of conservatism. In it, he admonished, on the one hand, that revolutions are always problematic because of their violence and the centralization of power to a revolutionary elite. He placed people's duties to society above their individual rights. And he rejected the idea of the social contract in favor of the image of partnership:

"Society is indeed a contract. Subordinate contracts for objects of mere occasional interest may be dissolved at pleasure—but the state ought not to be considered as nothing better than a partnership agreement in a trade of pepper and coffee, calico or tobacco, or some other such low concern, to be taken up for a little temporary interest, and to be dissolved by the fancy of the parties. It is to be looked on with other reverence; because it is not a partnership in things subservient only to the gross animal existence of a temporary and perishable nature. It is a partnership in all science; a partnership in all art; a partnership in every virtue, and in all perfection. As the ends of such a partnership cannot be obtained in many generations, it becomes a partnership not only between those who are living, but between those who are dead, and those who are to be born."

The reference to the partnership with the dead, is important because it is used to justify that it is important to maintain traditions and institutions even against the current convenience, assuming that the ancestors had good reasons to set them up that way. Thus, from today's perspective, one can concede that the extended family played an important stabilizing role and that it could not be replaced by the bourgeois nuclear family. With Rahel Jaeggi, however, one must counter that there were also reasons to say goodbye to the extended family in its earlier form. Burke can be played off against himself here, because the abolition of the extended family was, after all, also carried out by our ancestors. As indicated above, it must be about the further development of institutions in favor of the preservation of values.

Burke's quotation, however, also contains a very progressive idea that can be found today in the arguments of climate activists: society is also a partnership with those who have not yet been born. Now, one can advance the cheap argument that this is why government debt should not be incurred. But it is more convincing that society must be designed in such a way that future generations can take it over and develop it further. In addition to a life-friendly earth, this also includes antifragile institutions.

A serious conservatism must therefore ask itself what its values really are and how they can be effectively achieved. Through such self-understanding, which could take place in the process of interculture, new joint political projects of progressive and conservative forces against the reactionaries of the extreme right would be possible. However, such eye-level collaborations will not be possible in the arenas of social media, but will have to take place on the ground, where physical proximity promotes a pragmatism of cooperation.

Unlike conservatism, reactionism has its roots not in a concern for the status quo (which may be justified), but in the hubris that could plunge the world Into a new great regression. No compromise can be made with it because it aims at the destruction of modernity. It is the steadfast refusal to accept the communicative constructedness of institutions. Reactionary ideologies are always mythical in nature. They allow only what can be traced back to myth to be valid. And this antipluralism makes them and the social worlds they dominate fragile.

In view of the attempts by American politicians to make the literary Gilead a reality and worldwide attention to the crimes of extremist religious milieus, one may be tempted to think of religiosity and reactionism together. But this is a misconception. Rather, religious communities should be seen as natural allies for a politics of humility—or at least held accountable on behalf of their proclaimed values. The religious right in the United States is a product of skillful tactics by Republican politicians. Before the moral panics of the last fifty years, a far more pluralistic landscape existed there as well.

In Germany, the churches show up in most people's everyday lives primarily in the guise of their charitable organizations. However justified the criticism of the lack of separation

of church and state and unresolved abuse in Germany, the churches are by and large more of a partner in alleviating human suffering. The church departures are therefore also regrettable because they leave the churches as more reactionary organizations eventually. A positive reference to the spiritual aspect of humility, common to (almost) all religions, makes them good partners. One need only think of the long tradition of left-wing Catholics who think universalistically and are driven to action by their faith, and of liberation theology.

Just how difficult such coalitions remain can be seen in the discussion about assisted suicide, which has reached the legislative level in Germany in 2023. While left-wing liberals are in favor of providing funds and support for dignified suicide, the measure is roundly rejected by church representatives. But even representatives of left-wing positions urge that such dignified suicide is only possible in a society that provides adequate support for the poor and mentally ill. If suicide functions as an alternative to care and social welfare, it must be rejected for them as well. In this situation, only a temporary coalition results, but that is, after all, the nature of all coalitions. At another stage in the development of the lifeworld, the question must be negotiated anew.

Schultz and Latour also already count religious actors as potential members of the ecological class. Ecology, they argue, can lead Christians in particular to a new political theology that can use creation as a reference to make the humble treatment of the environment plausible.

Such humble collaborations can carry us to novel solutions to problems. Only through the humility of listening to the other can antifragile cohesion emerge in the process of interculture.

So... um, I kind of wrote a little essay. That's why it took me so long to answer. Now, how can we build this meta-narrative? I'm not sure. Let's hear what you think.

Love

Hans

08/10/24 KB to HL

Dear Hans,

Holy shit. You really got carried away. Shouldn't you be doing your needs analysis? Well, in some way it's a part of that, right? Finding a common denominator for the progressive fringes and the conservative middle might actually help you frame your project.

Antifragility is a little contrived though, isn't it? I mean I'm fascinated by the idea of building a coalition with the aim of conserving what we have achieved in the history of ideas by anticipating ways these achievements might be endangered. It's just that we have to find words to better convey that idea.

Look at the "Green New Deal". That's a masterpiece of piecing together the good old times and the challenges of the future. But it didn't work for conservatives. We should probably go for a story that is resonating more with conservatives than with progressives. To them, precaution probably sounds better than learning. But maybe we should even go for something like "The War on Uncertainty". :D Or something that shames them a little bit: "humble conservatism". I kind of like that last one.

We can also play on the widespread mistrust in political and media institutions by saying that due to the prevalent biases it is necessary to implement ways of being prepared for everything instead of relying on the predictions of talking heads. Like... we're going on tangents so often... I actually don't know if this is pro-state or not?

You know what? Can you give me your number? I want to talk this through.

Love
Kate

Chat log #6

08/10/24

11:25 pm KB

Hi Hans, it's me.

So, what I'm wondering: is this something new or just some version of socialism or liberalism that we're talking about?

11:27 pm HL

Phew, beats me.

Let's see. It's definitely some kind of convivialism, because we're putting the people's interactions front and center. Inequality or ownership just aren't that much of a focus in our discussions. I guess we're just that bourgeois...

11:35 pm KB

Yeah, it's all from a place of privilege.

But I guess it also makes sense because we're talking about how to handle the elites in any kind of society. Like, there will always be dark personalities so there have to be practices of humility in any society.

11:43 pm HL

Yes, we'll always need humble conservatism. ;)

11:45 pm KB

There you go.

08/11/24

9:22 am HL

So, I thought some more about it. I'd say the central philosopher for the idea of putting humility at the center of thinking about human freedom dignity is Beauvoir. She doesn't have this idealist idea that every person just has dignity because they have the potential for reason. It's something we have to struggle for. In a world where some people try to enslave others, we cannot just be content with knowing that we theoretically have something that cannot be taken from us, when all of dignity's markers (freedom over our body, shelter etc.) can be taken from us. I think the German constitution shows this nicely: it says that no one's dignity can be taken away from them. But if that were true, we wouldn't have to state it as a law. In fact this counterfactual statement serves as a protection against the state taking people's dignity. But even this right sometimes has to be fought for in a court of justice. At the same time, Beauvoir says, this struggle is

against our own hubris. Because if we're not able to let people use their reason freely, we are hurt by their unfree actions towards ourselves. My manager in a former employer once told me that if she doesn't listen to our expertise and just does what she thinks is right, in the end, she will suffer the consequences of her hubris, because she doesn't know our field of expertise as well as we do. So, to conclude, we might call this "Beauvoirian democratism". Everything else is downstream from this thought.

Or maybe we can call it "Seventh Stageism". Okay, I don't know if you know Kohlberg's stages of moral development which progress from obeying rules to avoid punishment, seeking personal gain, desiring social approval, respecting law and order, understanding social contracts, adhering to universal ethical principles, and finally, achieving a cosmic sense of moral unity. He said that people differ in which stage they reach in their lifetime. Some people only ever reach the second stage (Machiavellians). Even people who sometimes reach the sixth stage, often act according to the third stage (wanting to be a good boy or girl). The seventh stage though is one where you understand fully how you're part of the world and the world is a part of you. It's basically enlightenment in the Daoist sense. Some people said that Confucius was actually the best Daoist, because after attaining enlightenment he turned back to the world and concerned himself with how it should be run from a deeper understanding of the way the world works. I'd say, having a deep spiritual sense of being a network is what makes us humble.

Maybe that's also what makes a prophet?

12:01 pm KB

Damn, all that deep thinking while I was dreaming of being a little rabbit. :D

Okay, I guess now we have one label for when we talk to conservatives, one for philosophers, and one for esoterics. And for leftists we just call it socialism.

I like how your thoughts fit with the idea of Jonah as the archetypal prophet who has to struggle with his hubris.

By the way, this made me think of Kendrick. I don't know if you saw the music video.

12:21 pm HL

Yeah, I did, why?

12:26 pm KB

Did you catch where the clown says "You're late"? It fits perfectly with my theory that Kendrick sees his mission as saving the culture. But he has been so preoccupied with his personal struggles as Mr Morale that he disregarded this mission and is now finally catching up.

12:30 pm HL

Oh, good catch. Have you already told r/KendrickLamar? :D

12:31 pm KB

:P

08/12/24

1:12 pm HL

Ooh, the convivialists have answered. They want us to give a paper at a conference in Vienna on December 7. Now I'm panicking a little bit. Is there even anything new we're saying? I mean the basic argument that we need to rethink kinship structures in order to build broader coalitions to change power dynamics is something that Feminist scholars have said for decades. We could talk about how we think this might be made more palatable to conservatives (although I'm not convinced our ideas actually work) or about how to work towards decentering the nuclear family through CSKs (which still has to be proven as a working concept). Or we could talk about how political ideologies are devalued by the fact that hubris ruins everything?

Do you even want to do something like that?

2:04 pm KB

Hm, I don't know. That's much more real than anything I've been doing recently.

Maybe we can just shock them by talking about trans prophets. ;)

2:12 pm HL

Talking to you is like having intrusive thoughts. :P

2:14:pm KB

I'm doing my best.

Anywho… should we do this? How does this fit into our strategy? Do we have a strategy at all?

2:21 pm HL

I mean… you're building a public brand in order to at some point pivot into a criticism of atomization. I'm building an example project of how to do this in a community. Together we're trying to figure out what we want to say at all and who we can cooperate with… I guess… is that a strategy?

If it is, this seems to be a good step.

2:25 pm HL

Okay, so, we're doing this. Why don't we talk about how your father inspired us to do the opposite of what he's doing?

2:31 pm KB

I'd like that. "How to do the Anti-Winslow?"

4:56 pm HL

I called them and told them, we're in.

08/13/24

1:39 pm KB

Okay, I've written an introduction.

I know what being alone means. I know what having a patriarch decide your fate means. My life has been a combination of the worst aspects of living in a 20th century and a 19th century family. My 21st century life has been archaic in ways I only slowly come to understand.

Responsible for this state of affairs is one of the men who have been trying to remake the world according to their whimsies. One of the robber barons of the new gilded age. A Machiavellian, a narcissist, a psychopath, a sadist, my father: Neo Winslow. A man who has formed my thinking about the world in ways that he probably never anticipated.

This man tried to make me into his image, when this didn't work he tried to suppress and kill my true self, until I finally severed all ties. I have seen, like many others now clearly see, that he is a monster, a vampire trying to suck dry all of humanity—him and his fellow billionaires.

So I decided to become the opposite of him, trying to tear down everything he represents and work for a society that doesn't allow for people like him to become minor gods.

Now, obviously, not being like him means not having inifinite amounts of money to spend on whatever I want. He made sure to cut me of from all the sources of income that being his little pet would have given me. I'm as close to bankruptcy and homelessness as every one of you. Precarity is our lot.

Without any funds, I had to fall back on what he has left me: being his estranged and disgruntled daughter. So, I started insulting him from afar. Playing his own game—just a little bit better than him. But of course that is just a way to let of steam, show other trans youths that there are still some voices out there who care about them, and to signal potential partners that I am willing to engage in a positive way. Well, now I'm here.

But what has been on my mind for some time is how to really push an agenda that transforms society in ways that make it less exploitable and more liveable. While I have been drawing attention, my partner Hans Lieb has developed a plan to systematically build institutions that are fundamentally contrary to what my father has been expounding as solutions to our modern crises.

While Neo Winslow and his peers want to grab all the defense contracts, destroy public infrastructures, polarize public discourse, and use fascism to destroy everything that could hurt their bottom line, we intend to build institutions that act against the basic problem of modern society: the crippling of discourse and conviviality.

This is a task that is not scalable like a social media platform or an online marketplace. It requires valuing the single community and all it's individuals. It is also something that goes against our instincts as millennials and zoomers who prefer not having to take calls but to order our Uber eats with a few clicks.

We have to learn humility—the willingness to listen to our peers and neighbors instead of isolating ourselves from everyone who is different from us. At the core of this sentiment is that our understanding of what being an individual means is fundamentally flawed. Simon de Beauvoir teaches us that our personal freedom is based on the freedom of everyone around us. We are, in the words of Bruno Latour, not just embedded in networks. We are networks. I am everyone and everything that enables me to act. So, if I hurt them, I hurt myself. If I ignore them, I ignore myself. And, lastly, as Axel Honneth teaches us: we can only be complete persons if our relationships are authentic and real. If we realize this—in the sense of making it on a rational and emotional level a fundamental principle of our identity—we cannot help but care for our communities.

Of course this sounds like a conservative sentiment. It is. But we have to also recognize that our communities are diverse in every sense of the term and we must try to listen to every voice and value every individual equally. In this way the difference of conservatism and progressivism becomes meaningless. The enemies of our time are the unrealities, the myths, and the irrational fears of the global reactionaries. We must not give them a single inch.

But the struggle cannot be a violent one. It must not be the struggle of the terrorist or the soldier but the struggle of the martyr and the social worker. The struggle for life, not against it. And it must—as I said before—be a local one.

So, what is our idea? It might sound ridiculous in comparison to the pathos I used here. Community-supported kitchens. Bear with me. Change cannot come from the institutions we're living in. We must transform our societies into participation societies, if we want to open up rooms for discourse and conviviality. People need the time and leisure to talk to each other. The average day of an average person involves getting up early, working too much, maybe taking care of children or elders and then making dinner and going to bed. Where can we find time without angering the system so much that it crushes us? Our guess is that we can find some time in the evening if we take away from the burdens of household chores. Establishing a network of community-supported kitchens with associated leisure activities and learning opportunities has the potential to open up spaces for engaging with each other and the community.

Hans here will start exactly this kind of community-supported kitchen in the city of Lübeck. He will introduce you to how he is going about it and will be here for your questions.

2:08 pm HL

Haha, "introduction". You've written the whole speech. I love it. I'll just add some sentences about the project.

I was thinking: maybe we should tape the speech and edit it for internet consumption?

2:20 pm KB

Yeah, let's do that.

By the way: I'm thinking about doing a similar project to yours in Austin. Maybe we can make it a twin project? Like, down the line, allow for some exchange. That might be fun. I have a friend who is a cook and has done some community work. I might ask her.

2:23 pm HL

That's a great idea. Let's go transnational. Do you have any ideas for funding?

2:33 pm KB

Not yet. But I'm trying to change your application a little bit to apply for a local fund and maybe some private foundations. If that's okay for you.

2:35 pm HL

Sure, go ahead.

2:38 pm KB

I wouldn't run it on a day to day basis. But I could do the financial stuff and my friend would do... all the real work.

2:40 pm HL

Good plan. I have to find me someone like that. :D

08/25/24

10:21 am KB

Hey, have you heard anything about the convivialist thing?

10:23 am HL

They just accepted that we're going to give a talk. I'll send you the program, when they are ready. But you might want to book a flight. Do you need any money for that?

10:25 am KB

No, I'm fine. I just got some money from writing a column for an online magazine. Should I come some days earlier? We could do a little vacation before you start your project. Like, I've heard Viennese coffee houses are the shit. I haven't seen you in person yet…

10:37 am HL

Wow, you're right. We've never met. Let that sink in.

10:38 am KB

:P

Chat log #6 tbc

The Humility of Neo Winslow by Kate Bokononova, published on Overstack, 8/31/24

"I didn't do it for the sake of ease or profit, but to try to help humanity, whom I love. I approach this mission with humility, fully aware that I might fail."

When Neo Winslow said this, he had just bought one of the biggest social media companies and was about to destroy it in the process of remaking his favorite toy into something that did everything he wanted it to do. Like every billionaire entrepreneur he had reshaped the world in various ways before. Now, in this short message he gave the most concise rationalization of his actions we could wish for: love for humanity and humility.

Normally, when I raise my voice publicly it is to criticize something horrible my father or his peers have done or said. In this article I want to get a little closer to the core of his (self-)deception than usual. Neo likes to portrait himself as the greatest humanitarian in the world by referring to the business ventures, he is involved in. He saved solar energy, he saved space travel, he saved free speech. Bla bla bla. And his sycophants and stans all support this self-aggrandizement.

Now, those are very worthy endeavors indeed. I'm all for saving humanity. But does he really care about humanity? No. I *know* that all he cares about is a simulacrum, a fictional representation, a fantasy of humanity. And it is not humility that is driving him, but the opposite: hubris. Why would I say that? Because I know that his knowledge about how the world is and how it should be stems from fantastical sources—sci-fi to be precise. Neo lives in a world of shrugging atlases, Tony Starks, and Hari Seldons whose willpower alone brings about a utopia.

He says that he loves humanity. But he doesn't really love a single human being. He doesn't even know a human being. He is surrounded by henchmen, breeding machines, and vessels for his DNA to continue populating the world. Nobody is any more to him than that. Well, enemies… Everyone else is an enemy. And the world to him is a strategy game where he has to gain control of all the resources to colonize ever more *Lebensraum*.

Of course you could say: I don't care how he views the people around him as long as he churns out more electric cars and builds a colony on Venus or something. But what his taking-over of a certain messaging service has shown us is that his mission is not one of pure humanitarianism, but one that is only as good as its literary source. His idea of freedom of speech is a space where the epic trolls can commit stochastic terrorism all they want as long as they don't remind him of something he doesn't like to admit or think about. That is to say, it is an idea from the pages of edgy comic books. He created a safe space for wannabe Punishers, Lobos, and Deadpools.

When a project is not built on real humility—which is the willingness to see one's peers as full human beings with dignity, wants, and opinions that have to be attended to—it is necessarily a dictatorial one. And we all know that a benevolent dictatorship lasts only until the paranoia and hubris of power set in.

True humility is not the slave morality of being content with one's lot in life. It is about how we use our agency, our power. Instead the belief in a natural order of society is what we now call authoritarianism and is closely aligned with the narcissistic and sadistisc tendencies that led Neo to increasingly align with the cruel right-wing of today's United States. Slave and master moralities are perfectly mirrored. Humility instead leads us to understanding democracy as a holistic way of life. Looking for compromise and common interests in all we do.

So, what would this world look like, if Neo Winslow knew the least thing about humility? Many more people would still be employed and less psychologically damaged. Maybe electric cars wouldn't be as ugly. Maybe there wouldn't be private spacecraft. Democracy would definitely be less damaged. And I might still have a dad, not just someone who impregnated my mother, bought me some cotton candy, and then decided my true self was dead to him.

Don't let anyone sell you the idea that we need Neo Winslows to carry us into the future. There is a place in society for *homo faber*, but not as our leaders. Let the worshippers of metal and concrete build our material infrastructure, but don't let them redesign our society according to their necrophilic fantasies. What we need above all are people who are willing to listen and care.

Chat log #6 continued

08/31/24

9:21 am HL

I just read your article. Wow. It already has thousands of reposts. I actually saw it on Reddit too. It says that you're going to write regularly?

12:01 pm KB

Yeah, it really blew up. I have to turn my phone off again in a minute. It's a little overwhelming.

I want to write about our projects and ideas. Like, expand on the theme of humility a little more.

But I'm going offline again now. I don't want to talk to any editors right now.

1:52 pm HL

You're doing great. :)

Chat log #6 tbc

Neo Winslow Fires Back at Daughter's Critique, Defends Transformative Vision, The New York Times, 9/3/24

Neo Winslow has responded sharply to his daughter Kate Bokononova's recent critique in Overstack, dismissing her claims as "naïve" and "lacking an understanding of the real demands of progress." Bokononova's piece attacked Winslow's approach, labeling it as self-centered and detached from true humanity. Winslow, however, firmly rebuffed these accusations, arguing that her perspective misrepresents both his motives and the scope of his achievements.

"Vision isn't about popularity or pleasing everyone," Winslow tweeted. "It's about making bold choices that others are too cautious to pursue." He asserted that his innovations, from electric cars to space exploration, are critical advancements that require a forward-thinking approach—one he says his daughter, as a student without industry experience, fails to grasp. Winslow's supporters echoed his sentiments, dismissing Bokononova's piece as misguided and emphasizing the vast benefits his contributions have brought to society. For Winslow, her critique is just noise against the backdrop of his mission to push humanity forward, regardless of dissenting voices.

Bokononova's column on Overstack has been cancelled after the first article although more were planned. The editor of Overstack responded to our inquiries that they wanted to give trans issues a voice, but had to think of ad customers. They distanced themselves from the communist overtones of the column.

Chat log #6 continued

10:07 am KB

So it goes, right?

10:28 am HL

Shit. That's rough.

10:36 am KB

At least the Times was quite fair. I don't even want to know what the other rags wrote. Seems like I'm back to shit posting.

That didn't help with funding in Texas either...

I'm lucky if my department lets me finish the PhD.

10:40 am HL

Really? Has anyone said something about that?

10:43 am KB

The dean is "concerned about the public image the article conveys". My advisor says she'll "fight" for me. That sounds quite serious. Everyone's concerned about funding.

10:50 am HL

I'm so sorry. That's really stupid.

I mean that's quite a tame op-ed about someone who is openly aligning with Nazis.

10:54 am KB

Yeah, but he's always butthurt when I say something publicly. And saying that he's not the new caesar of progress goes against his image too much. Like, I didn't just say that aligning with Nazis is bad, but that everything he has done is not what it seems to be. He really doesn't like that.

10:57 am HL

What now?

11:00 am KB

Well, I'm definitely coming to Vienna. I hope the Europeans are still a little more brave.

11:04 am HL

Ha, that's not a sentence I expected to ever read.

11:10 am KB

Anyway, I have to really write that second article now—show how much I want to finish my PhD.

11:12 am HL

Okay, stay safe.

10/06/24

9:53 am HL

I didn't get the funding. Apparently they found the articles about us when they googled me. A civil servant in the funding office told me inofficially because they liked the project and are sorry that it won't happen. I guess my name is burned too.

10:06 am KB

Oh no, I'm so sorry.

What do they think you are? Some kind of conman-guru?

10:08 am HL

Yeah, apparently.

10:12 am KB

What are you going to do now?

10:15 am HL

Become a cult leader? :P

I don't know.

Chat log #6 tbc

Travis County District Court Filing

IN THE DISTRICT COURT OF TRAVIS COUNTY, TEXAS

Plaintiff:

Neo Winslow,

[Redacted]

Defendant:

Kate Bokononova,

[Redacted]

Case No.: [Redacted]

COMPLAINT FOR DECLARATION OF LEGAL INCOMPETENCE

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1. Jurisdiction and Venue

1.1.   This Court has jurisdiction over this matter under Texas Probate Code Section 1101.001, which grants the Court authority to determine the legal competence of individuals residing within the state of Texas.

1.2.   Venue is appropriate in this Court as Defendant Kate Bokononova resides in Travis County, Texas, and the events giving rise to this Complaint occurred within this jurisdiction.

2. Parties

2.1.   Plaintiff, Neo Winslow, is the biological father of Defendant, Kate Bokononova.

2.2.   Defendant, Kate Bokononova, is a 23-year-old individual currently residing in Travis County, Texas.

3. Statement of Facts

3.1. Plaintiff is a prominent technology entrepreneur with a considerable estate, of which Defendant has historically been a beneficiary.

3.2. In or around January 2024, Defendant, without consulting Plaintiff, made the decision to sever all connections to Plaintiff's estate, effectively renouncing any claim to financial support, inheritance, or other familial benefits.

3.3. Plaintiff alleges that Defendant's decision to sever ties is a result of impaired judgment and a lack of understanding of the consequences of this action.

3.4. Plaintiff contends that Defendant has exhibited indications of mental health challenges that raise concerns regarding her capacity to make rational, informed decisions concerning her personal, financial, and familial well-being.

3.5. Plaintiff believes Defendant is being unduly influenced by outside individuals, including Hans Lieb, who may not have her best interests at heart.

4. Grounds for Declaration of Incompetence

    4.1.   Plaintiff believes and alleges that Defendant is unable to adequately understand or manage her personal, financial, and familial affairs.

    4.2.   Plaintiff contends that Defendant's actions and choices have been compromised by undue influence, emotional distress, and potentially impaired mental health, as evidenced by her decision to renounce family support and separate herself from familial assets.

5. Relief Sought

    5.1.   Plaintiff requests that this Court issue an order declaring Defendant, Kate Bokononova, legally incompetent.

    5.2.   Plaintiff further requests that the Court appoint a legal guardian to manage Defendant's personal and financial matters to ensure her well-being and protect her from external influence.

6. Prayer for Relief

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff prays that the Court:

    6.1.   Declare Kate Bokononova legally incompetent;

    6.2.   Appoint a legal guardian to manage Defendant's personal and financial matters;

    6.3.   Grant any other relief deemed appropriate by the Court.

Date: 10/08/24

Respectfully Submitted,

Marc Baker

Attorney for Plaintiff, Neo Winslow

Press release from the Family Office of Neo Winslow

Austin, TX — October 28, 2024

In a decision with far-reaching implications for both family and privacy, billionaire tech entrepreneur Neo Winslow has successfully petitioned the Travis County District Court to have his daughter, Kate Bokononova, legally declared incompetent. The court filing, initially submitted on October 8, cited concerns over Kate's recent actions and decisions, which Winslow described as evidence of impaired judgment and susceptibility to undue influence.

The court's decision allows for the appointment of a legal guardian to oversee Kate's personal and financial matters, with the primary goal of ensuring her well-being. Winslow's concerns were reportedly heightened after Kate, 23, chose in January 2024 to renounce all ties to her father's estate, cutting herself off from family financial support and leaving Winslow deeply worried about her ability to protect herself both financially and emotionally.

Friends and colleagues close to Winslow have expressed sympathy for the difficult position he found himself in. Known for his groundbreaking work in the tech sector, Winslow has been publicly grappling with Kate's choices, occasionally sharing his distress on social media. The public, as well as those close to Winslow, acknowledge that seeking a court ruling to declare a family member incompetent is a drastic and emotionally taxing step. However, many have voiced support, understanding Winslow's efforts to protect his daughter from perceived undue influences.

It's a delicate situation that highlights the challenges even the wealthiest and most influential families can face. For Winslow, whose focus has often been on advancing technology and building his empire, this has been a particularly personal battle. As the court-appointed guardian begins their role, those close to the family hope the decision will ultimately lead to a path of healing and reconciliation.

Article in Austin Starr

Austin, TX — October 30, 2024

In a deeply concerning turn of events, Kate Bokononova, the 23-year-old daughter of billionaire tech mogul Neo Winslow, has been admitted to a mental health facility following a period of severe psychological stress. According to close sources, Kate's recent actions, coupled with a growing level of emotional distress, have culminated in her temporary institutionalization as she undergoes intensive treatment and evaluation.

Kate, a promising young PhD candidate in psychology, faced a series of challenges over the past year, including a public and painful separation from her father's estate earlier in 2024. After renouncing all familial financial ties in May, Kate found herself relying entirely on merit-based grants for her studies and living expenses, a choice that raised concern among family and friends. Her relationship with Hans Lieb, whom family sources allege may have played a significant role in encouraging her independence from the Winslow estate, has only added to her father's worry for her well-being.

Neo Winslow, visibly shaken by his daughter's mental health crisis, expressed his sorrow at seeing Kate undergo such turmoil. Having recently taken legal action to declare Kate legally incompetent—a motion granted just days ago—Winslow's concern for his daughter's welfare has been evident, with those close to him noting how difficult it has been for him to watch her struggle. "Neo only wants what's best for Kate," shared a family friend. "This isn't about control; it's about making sure she's safe, healthy, and supported."

Winslow's decision to intervene in Kate's life, both legally and medically, has not come lightly. Friends and associates of the family, aware of the difficult relationship between the two, have conveyed deep sympathy for Winslow, recognizing the emotional toll it has taken on him to see Kate in such distress.

While Kate is now receiving the care she needs, it is uncertain when she may be released or what the future holds for her academic and personal pursuits. For now, her friends, family, and father are focusing on her recovery, with hopes that this period of institutional support will help her regain stability and chart a healthy path forward.

Chat log #6 continued

11/03/24

9:39 am HL

Kate? I only just read the articles about what happened to you. Are you okay?

11/06/24

11:21 pm HL

I'm so sorry. This is horrible. I hope you'll read this one day. You can always come here. We'll find some way for you to stay here and get the support you need. I've talked to an asylum lawyer. He said after this you might have a food chance to get political asylum in Germany. You really have to try.

Chat log #6 ends

E-mail from h.lieb3@*****.com to kate.bokononova@***.edu on 11/08/24

Dear Kate,

Apparently someone is reading our chats. I was contacted by the family office yesterday. They told me not to contact you anymore. This is the only way I know to contact you.

I talked to someone at your department who was able to give me a number of one of your friends. We are making plans to bring you to Germany as soon as you're out of the treatment center. After the inauguration you are sure to get asylum in Germany. Please let me know how to contact you safely when you can.

Love

Hans

Herbert Abraham: Neo Winslow's most difficult year, The Atlantic, 12/07/24

Neo Winslow is shaking. His new workout routine reaches its most intense phase with the bench presses. 150 pounds are on the barbell. Since he has taken up bodybuilding in order to prepare for the cage fight that his nemesis Yoel Rahm and he have been teasing the world about for almost two years, his physique has changed markedly. Gone is the light slump and beer belly that marked his early fifties due to overwhelming workloads. Now that he has finished the fifth repetition he grins for the camera. His face glistening. "Tell Yoel, I'm coming for him!"

Although he's still keeping up the cheery front, Neo has been through hell this year. Not only is his newest acquisition still struggling after he reformed the messaging service to make it commercially viable. Getting more involved in American politics has made him a figure beloved in some circles, hated in others. His many enterprises are reeling from the consequences of his changing public perception. Meanwhile European regulators are on his back, trying to steer him in directions he sees critically. He is quite vocal about using his new government position to quench these nuisances.

But all this has been pushed to the back of his consciousness in comparison to the inexplicable behavior of his trans-daughter Kate, born as Timothée, who since the transition distanced herself more and more. Being indoctrinated through the DEI curriculum of her liberal high school, she loudly announced her willingness to break all ties and spewed Marxist propaganda through her social media all year, culminating in her infamous August article disavowing all Neo has built. The mental stress led to the suicide attempt in late October that made it necessary to institutionalize Kate for the time being.

And now there are allegations from far-left conspiracy theorists that the deadly car accident that killed German citizen Hans Lieb in the city of Lübeck might be traced back to Winslow. Lieb used his short stint as a psychological consultant at Suxxass LLC (the Winslow family office) to further estrange Kate from her family and served as a kind of cult-guru to her for the past year—arguably accentuating her mental distress. There have been allegations that he was a Democrat plant to undermine Winslows political ambitions. The truth seems to be that he is connected to a Marxist sect called the convivialists who have some members in European countries.

"I don't have any sympathies for people trying to undermine my family," says Winslow. "But connecting me to a random accident in Germany has to be the worst kind of antisemitic conspiracy theory." He shakes his head, distraught. "I would never hurt my son." But Neo Winslow is not one to dwell. Soon he is back to talking about the future. "After our electoral success, the economy is saved from the worst downturn in history.

Now we can concentrate on streamlining the administrative state and setting free the power of American business."