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Change | *Divergently*



ALTERNATIVES TO ABA, BULLYING & ABUSE, MENTAL HEALTH, PDA: PATHOLOGICAL DEMAND AVOIDANCE, RELATIONSHIPS, RESOURCES FOR EDUCATORS, RESOURCES FOR PHYSICIANS & THERAPISTS, RESOURCES FOR THE NEURODIVERGENT, TRAUMA, WORKPLACE DISCRIMINATION

Understanding power and de-powering



By Jorn Bettin

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The normalisation of social power gradients and powered-up relationships is the terminal disease that plagues all empires. Since we live in the context of the convulsions of dying empires, it is important to understand the cultural dynamics that are unfolding.

Joseph Tainter's analysis of complex societies shows that collapse of hierarchical complexity "is not a fall to some primordial chaos, but a return to the normal human condition of lower complexity".

This article offers a curated list of valuable public learning resources for our current times, to help us acknowledge our cognitive and emotional limits, and slow down to the relational speed life at human scale. There is a logical sequence to the referenced educational videos. Together they form a crash course for understanding the toxic effects of all forms of social power.










The timeless art of de-powering and maintaining trustworthy de-powered relationships was well understood by Daoist scholars. I consider it to be the forgotten signature trait of our species, predating the emergence of powered-up empires by several hundred thousand years.

Onwards!

1. The sickness of powered-up relationships & societies
 1. Cult of the self



Accessibility Tools

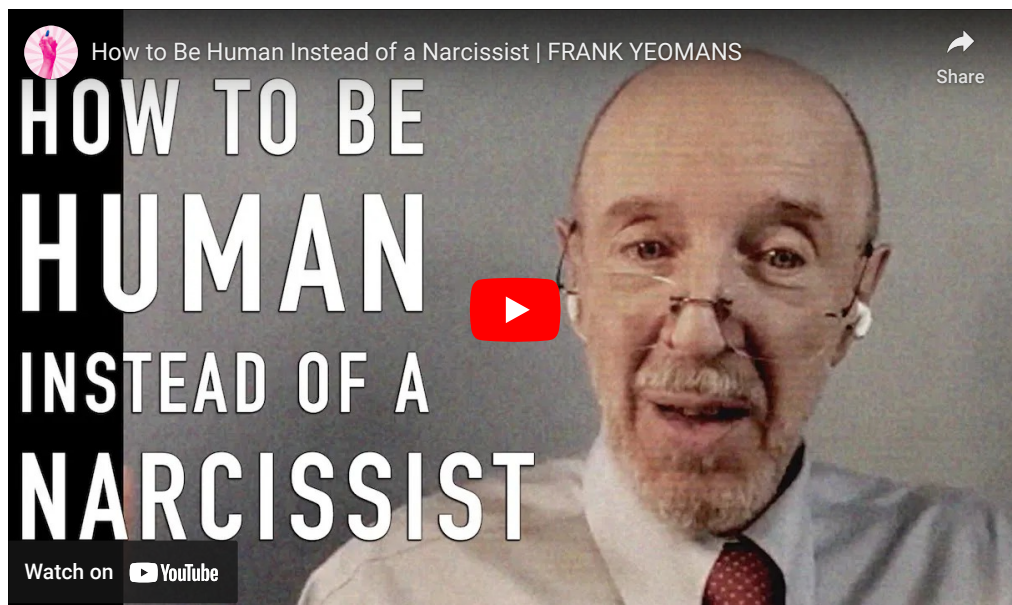
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The sickness of powered-up relationships & societies

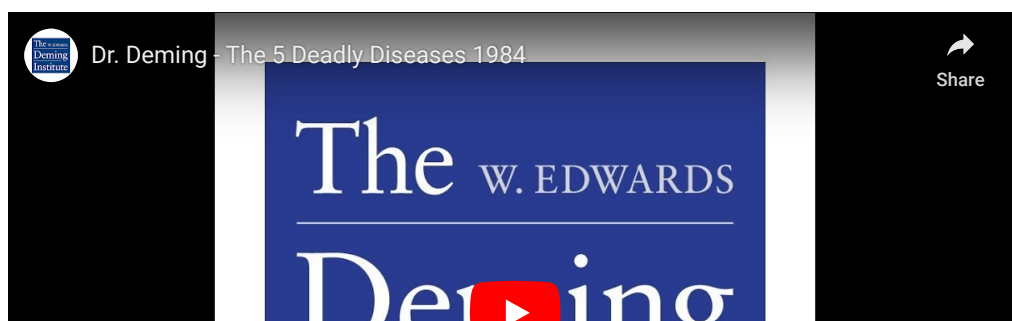
Cult of the self

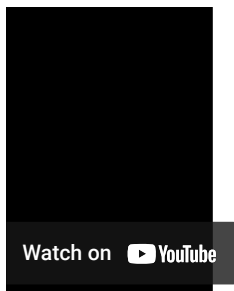
In **WEIRD performance oriented cultures** powered-up relationships are normalised at all levels of scale, resulting in a toxic culture of fear and **a collective learning disability**.



Maintaining the illusion of control

As long as an organisation describes itself with a pyramidal organisational chart it projects a not-very-subtle-at-all signal that management by fear is to be tolerated by and is expected of anyone who joins. Ultimately all forms of “management by fear” amount to bullying, and Autistic people are highly sensitive to such attempts of manipulation.





Dehumanisation

“Conversion therapies” such as Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) are pseudoscientific practices of trying to change an individual’s behaviour to conform to the social expectations of a particular culture using psychological and physical interventions.



Recognising the sick logic of power

The logic of power in religion

You can listen to the following educational video on toxic dogmatic religions and replace *religion* with *capitalism* to begin to understand how deeply embedded and normalised the coercive power of capital is in Westernised cultures.



The logic of power at work

Here is the above story transposed onto the capitalist work ethic, which systematically sanctifies capital. What is the sacred work of God in dogmatic religions is replaced by the sacred work of Capital.



The resultant logic of fear

The commonality across all cults and powered-up empires is ubiquitous fear. To create conditions of ubiquitous fear, dogmatic religions and capitalism install the toxic belief that humans are fundamentally bad and lazy by nature, and therefore need to be controlled and disciplined.

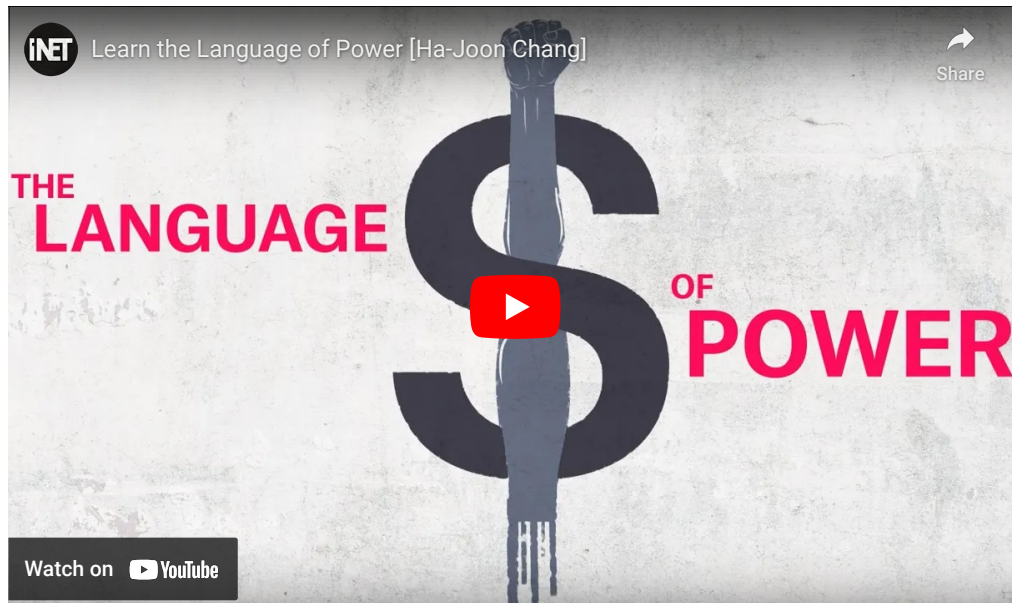


Advice for the inmates of dying empires

De-legitimising the language of power

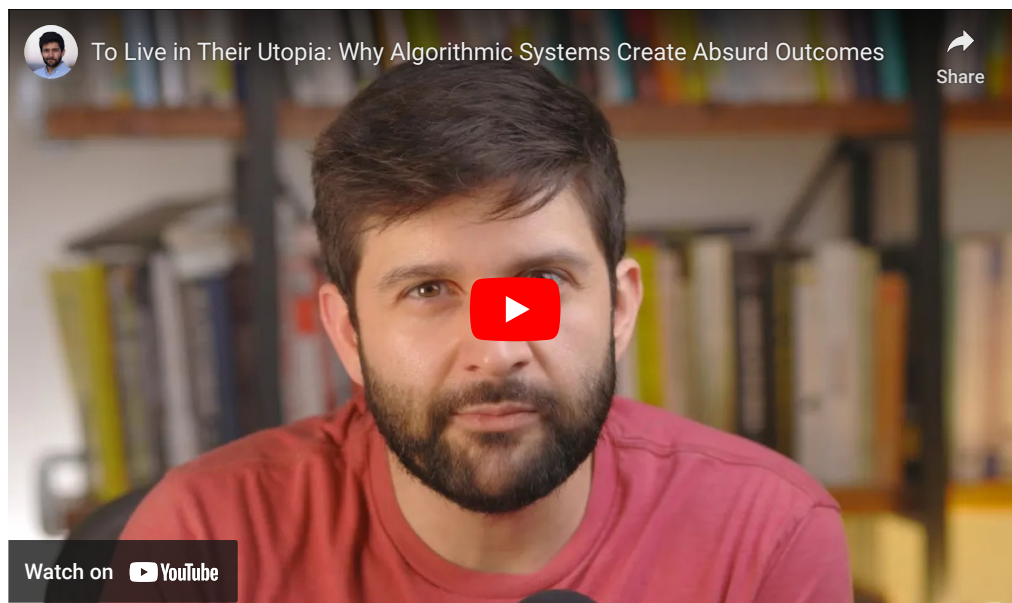
The common theme across the global mono-cult of capitalism is the willingness to exploit other people for personal gain, including the audacity to take personal credit for the results of others or for the results achieved as part of a team. And as importantly, neither economics nor

the Internet draw directly on an evidence based understanding of physics, biology, and human behaviour.



Both the Internet and economic theories are best understood as **prescriptive rather than as observational tools**, as language systems that are based on specific European and North American cultural conventions that are assumed as 'sensible' (common sense) or 'obvious' (self-evident).

With these language systems in place we can measure data flows and economic performance, but only in terms of **the scope and the preconceived categories afforded by the formal protocols and languages**.



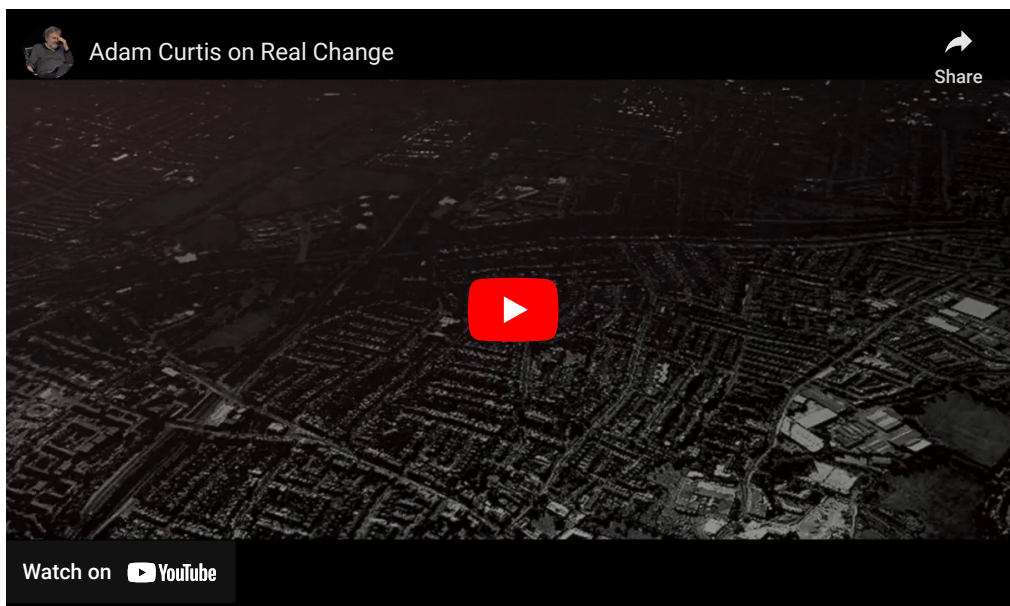
The tools of civilisation, including money, have **undermined our appreciation of interdependence**, and within the Western world have culminated in a toxic cult of competitive individualism, which amongst the non-autistic population ironically leads to extreme levels of groupthink.

It is learning how to take our differences and make them strengths. For the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house. They may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change.

– Audrey Lorde, Black, lesbian, feminist, socialist, mother, warrior, poet

Do you really want change?

Fundamental change in the cultural environment of a hypernormative cult-like society requires changes in how we relate to other people and non-human living beings. By definition it is not something that anyone can do in isolation, it requires collective action. How do we bootstrap a safe environment of trustworthy de-powered relationships when we have grown up and are surrounded by powered-up relationships at home, at work, and in wider society? And how do we avoid re-creating yet another system of powered-up relationships?



Becoming conscious of human cognitive and emotional limits, and recognising that these limits are just as real, immutable, and relevant for our survival as the laws of physics may allow us to avoid the fate of earlier civilisations, and to embark on a path of radical energy descent.

We can tap into many years of experience with **egalitarian worker co-ops**, with practicing **de-powered dialogue**, and with **consistently using an advice process** before arriving at decisions that may affect others in major ways, as well as many centuries of **lived experience within indigenous societies**.

Best practices for social collapse

An ideological bias towards market based “solutions” obscures institutional problems. 250 years of industrialised civilisation have impaired our ability to understand and navigate the world in terms of **trusted relationships**. The fiction of homo economicus manifests itself in the belief in the need for external incentives and coercion.

The climate of fear in an atomised society has shrunk the sphere of discourse to the point where the existence of most institutions is no longer questioned. All potential institutional problems are assumed to be addressable by adding further complexity to established institutions or by complementing established institutions with further institutions.



Living fearlessly

The Autistic Collaboration community grows organically, at **human scale**, at a human pace, **one trusted relationship at a time**, as part of a process of **collaborative niche construction**, contributing to the wellbeing of Autistic and otherwise neurodivergent and **intersectionally marginalised people**.

The evolving web of **relationships**, **mutual aid**, and **peer support initiatives** is best understood in terms of emergent **Ecologies of Care** beyond the human, and is informed by our collective lived experience and by the results of **our ongoing participatory research**.

A beautiful quote from an article written by Pip Carroll (2020), in the lead up to the prolonged but ultimately very successful lock-down in Melbourne:

A caring society does not value the individual for their ability to return economic value, but simply for existing as their own imperfect self. We can't choose to be cared for any more than we can choose to win the lottery. We can only hope to develop the quality in others by offering care ourselves. Trusting that care, once given is ordained to return to another in need.

A shift from a global monoculture to ecosystems of human scale groups reduces the spurious complexity needed to support a monoculture, and it retains and even grows adaptive cultural complexity, i.e. the diversity that emerges when the human ecological footprint is aligned with bioregional ecosystem functions. Spurious complexity wastes energy – is the result of humans working against biological evolution, whereas adaptive complexity saves energy – it is the result of humans engaging in collaborative niche construction as a part of biological ecosystems.

You can join us in Open Space via the quarterly [NeurodiVerse Days of Solidarity](#).

Below are useful tools for living fearlessly.

Appreciating autonomy and ecologies of care at human scale

[Daoist philosophy](#)



Liberation of the marginalised

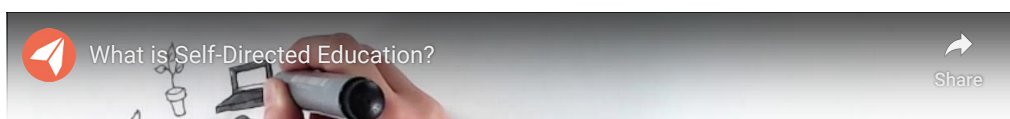
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[An Autistic Guide to Healthy Relationships](#)

Co-creating conditions conducive to life

[Self-Directed Education](#)





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Jorn Bettin

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The more we help each other to question in ways we otherwise wouldn't – and correspondingly discover new insights about the world and ourselves, the more we are able to learn from each other, and the more we start to understand each other. The gift that we all bring to the world is the (re)generative potential of all the trusted relationships that we co-create.

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