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Welcher Murakami?

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Editorial

Das zweite Heft der IWM*post* im vierzigsten Jahr des Bestehens des IWM soll Einblick geben in die große disziplinäre und thematische Bandbreite der am Institut betriebenen Forschung.

Besonders prominent vertreten sind Autor:innen, die sich philosophischen Fragestellungen widmen. **Fraenkel** erörtert die Relevanz der altgriechischen Philosophie für die Gegenwart am Beispiel von Aristoteles' Vorstellung vom guten Leben. **Zawisza** macht auf die Bedeutung der kabbalistischen Vision der Schöpfung für eine politische Theologie des Westens aufmerksam. Und **Barzilay** problematisiert das historische und politische Verständnis der Menschheit vor dem Hintergrund der Klima- und Nuklearkrise. Die kritischen Verwicklungen von Gender bzw. (De-)Kolonialität in der Wissensproduktion der Gegenwart behandeln **Kaiser-Trujillo** und **Dube** in ihren epistemologischen Essays.

Rambukwella und **Krause** entwickeln konzeptionelle Überlegungen zu Demokratie und Staatlichkeit, während **Krygier** und **Chandra** auf die eminente Bedeutung des Rechts für die Unterwanderung des Rechtsstaates durch Populisten eingehen. **Stiglitz** wiederum skizziert Herausforderungen für die Weltwirtschaft angesichts eines sich abzeichnenden neuen Kalten Krieges.

Zwei Essays richten die Aufmerksamkeit auf Opfer von Klimakatastrophen (**Das**) und Menschenhandel (**Kravić-Aksamit**). Der Westbalkan beziehungsweise die Ukraine sind der Fokus von vier Beiträgen dieses Hefts. **Zeneli** diskutiert den wachsenden Einfluss Chinas auf dem Westbalkan, während **Bender** Vorschläge zur Integration der Region in die EU unterbreitet. Die Texte zur Ukraine (**Skubii, Tsymbalyuk**) behandeln Veränderungen in der Mensch-Umwelt-Beziehung im Zuge von Krisen in Vergangenheit und Gegenwart.

Das Thema zweier Beiträge sind Literat:innen, deren Schriften im Hinblick auf ihre Reichweite und Rezeptionsbreite höchst unterschiedlich sind. **Hijiya-Kirschnereit** verweist auf die Fluidität von Haruki Murakamis Werk sowie den US-Kulturimperialismus, der seine globale Verbreitung begleitet hat. **Pokay** dagegen porträtiert die auf (Wieder-)Entdeckung wartende inoffizielle Dichterszene Leningrads der 1950er Jahre. Filmische Science-Fiction und die von ihr eingefangenen sozialen Technologieängste sind Gegenstand von **Meineckes** Essay.

Schließlich würdigt **Klaus Nellen** die Leistung eines langjährigen Freundes (Peter Demetz) und eines Urgesteins (David Souček) des IWM.

Ich wünsche Ihnen viel Freude beim Lesen. ◁

The second issue of IWM*post* in the fortieth year of the IWM is intended to provide insight into the broad disciplinary and thematic range of research conducted at the institute. Philosophical essays are at the center of the issue. **Fraenkel** discusses the relevance of ancient Greek philosophy for the present, focusing on Aristotle's conception of the good life. **Zawisza** draws attention to the importance of the kabbalistic vision of Creation for a political theology of the West. And **Barzilay** problematizes changes in the political and historical understanding of humanity in view of the climate and nuclear crises. The critical implications of gender and (de-)coloniality in contemporary knowledge production are the subject of **Kaiser-Trujillo's** and **Dube's** epistemological essays.

Rambukwella and **Krause** elaborate on conceptual reflections on democracy and statehood, while **Krygier** and **Chandra** address the eminent importance of law in the undermining the rule of law by populists. **Stiglitz,** in turn, outlines the challenges the global economy faces in light of an emerging new Cold War.

Two essays turn their attention to migrant victims of climate disasters (**Das**) and human trafficking (**Kravić-Aksamit**). The Western Balkans and Ukraine are the focus of four articles in this issue. **Zeneli** discusses China's growing influence in the Western Balkans, while **Bender** puts forward suggestions for the integration of the region into the EU. The essays on Ukraine (**Skubii, Tsymbalyuk**) address changes in the human-environment relationship in the wake of the crises of the past and present.

Literary figures whose writings are highly divergent in terms of their reach and breadth of reception are subject of two contributions. **Hijiya-Kirschnereit** highlights the fluidity of Haruki Murakami's work as well as the U.S. cultural imperialism that has accompanied its global dissemination. **Pokay,** on the other hand, looks at the unofficial poetry scene of 1950s Leningrad, which is still waiting to be rediscovered. Cinematic science fiction and the social technological anxieties it captures are the subject of **Meinecke's** essay.

Last but not least, **Klaus Nellen** pays tribute to the achievements of a long-time friend (Peter Demetz) and an IWM fixture (David Souček).

I hope you enjoy the read. ◁

Evangelos Karagiannis

Domestic Abuse: Populists and the Rule of Law

BY MARTIN KRYGIER

Populism and the rule of law have had renewed careers in recent decades—the rule of law in the last three, populism over the last one. Both have gone global and they have come to compete in many of the same spaces. This article examines their relationships. It concludes that contemporary populist regimes subject the rule of law to systematic abuse, vulgar and refined. Interestingly, a favored vehicle for both varieties of abuse of the rule of law is law.

Photo: ATTILA KISBENEDEK / AFP / picturedesk.com

Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán holds a speech at the parliament in Budapest on April 25, 2016.

In 1918, Vladimir Lenin wrote, adamantly and unapologetically, that his government was "based directly upon force and unrestricted by any laws." So it was and so it remained for a long time. Lenin was not alone in saying things like this and in doing as he said. Vladimir Putin, a lesser being but a filial descendant of Lenin in many ways, thinks and acts similarly. But when it comes to law, even he tried to pretend otherwise for a while, and these days lots of other regime leaders do too. Among them are the leaders of contemporary authoritarian populist regimes, such as those of Hungary, India, Poland, and several other countries in Asia and Latin America. And it is not just pretence: law does matter in the ways they rule.

Many of these regimes insist that they are true upholders of the rule of law, which must be rescued from those who have kidnapped it. They claim it is a victim of the elite "castes" who occupy legal institutions and abuse them for their own interests, and those of kindred parasites, at the expense of the real nation. These sinister, cosmopolitan, and educated urbanites need to be expunged or at least put in their lowly place, and the law itself brought to health, re-purposed, and re-staffed with people who know, or can be taught, how to respond appropriately to the people's true interests and demands.

Constitutionalism and the rule of law might, then, seem well served by these regimes, which treat the law with a seriousness that it has not always enjoyed. For some time, that seemed to be the hope of the European Commission in its endless "dialogues" with interlocutors who did not appear to be listening or understanding. Only gradually has it come to understand that the leaders of Hungary and Poland have no aural or epistemological problems at all. They hear what they are being told about the rule of law and understand it quite well. They simply have other plans that do rely on law but have no use for the rule of law.

The rule of law is much and contentiously discussed. I have written extensively about it and these discussions elsewhere.[1] Here it is enough to stress that its *raison d'ètre,* what makes it distinctive and precious, is to temper the exercise of power so that power is not available for arbitrary abuse. Not necessarily to *weaken* power, but to organize and channel it so that its exercise can be controlled, is relatively predictable, respects the rights of those it might bear on, and operates in ways justifiably related to its ostensible ends. Nowhere is perfect, of course, and the rule of law comes in many different shapes, sizes, and degrees, but where this does not routinely occur you might have a lot of law but not the rule of law.

This, however, is as far as can be from the ways of modern authoritarian populists with law. Where the rule of law calls for key powers to be checked, balanced, and separated, they seek to consolidate and concentrate them in their hands. Where it depends on substantial independence of power-adjudicators from power-wielders, such populists increase their dependence. Where one mediates power and calls for a patient filtering of decisions through institutions, the other seeks to make it all personal, unmediated, and unconstrained: it endorses an instantaneous quasi or pseudo democracy in which a decision by the leader may become law the next day.

It is not, however, always obvious that anything particularly sinister is happening. Institutions are "deflated rather than demolished by populist authoritarians."[2] The rule of law is typically brought down by "a thousand cuts,"[3] many of them small and often unseen, while the cumulative result is blood-letting of its ideals and principles, on a torrential scale. All done with the active assistance of law.

Europeans who have watched the cat-and-mouse games played between the European Commission and lawyers representing Poland and Hungary, or who have witnessed Hungary's Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's self-vaunted "peacock dances" in Brussels might have a sense of how these legal games are played. Apparently earnest and technical points of law are raised by regime lawyers: about interpretation, inclusion or exclusion of this or that provision, sacking and packing, dismantling or inventing, this or that court, "disciplining" this or that disobedient judge—all replete with poker-faced legal argumentation, typically of a highly formalistic sort. If critics allege that an institutional innovation is intended, say, to threaten judicial independence from the executive, the hunt will be on for some ostensible, context-free, in-any-way-similar-looking arrangement, cherry-picked from Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, or anywhere that might serve. That these comparisons and purported borrowings are radically superficial, selective, decontextualized, and hostile to the rule of law[4] is rarely obvious to laypersons and never, naturally enough, emphasized by their sponsors.

Where the point of the rule of law is undermined in such ways, what we are seeing is an often-refined form of legal *abuse,* which is something very different from defiance or ignorance or rejection of the law. Of course, there is a lot of straightforward vulgar abuse and gaslighting as well: accusations and insults hurled, constantly and from on high, at the "castes" of judges and lawyers and any who would support them. They are intimidated, disciplined and they are sued (by lawyers appointed precisely for such purposes). But in another sense abuse is an art, a particular sort of chicanery well recognized by the law, whereby one pretends fealty to formal rules to achieve purposes alien to their underlying (and often unwritten) aims. In the populist rendition of this art, law is *used* precisely so that the purpose and the fundamental principles of the rule of law can be abused.[5]

Moreover, because that purpose and those principles have no weight with these leaders, they can at one moment be constitutional pedants when it serves their ends, and at another be "constitutionally shameless"[6] when pedantry does not work for them. So, Fidesz with its constitutional majority in Hungary can afford more pedantry than Poland's Law and Justice (PiS), which, without such a majority, needs to cheat more often and more obviously. Indeed cheating, as examined in András Sajó's excellent recent book, *Ruling by Cheating,* has now become virtually a technical term, so apt is it to describe the contemporary legalistic abuse of the rule of law. Constitutional courts are gutted, neutralized, packed, and then mobilized for the regime, all in the name of court reform and the rule of law. So use is elided with abuse, and the principles of the rule of law are deliberately and systematically trashed, *in its name.* This is a particularly insidious mode of assault that is often very effective.

As a result, a new form of legal scholarship, a kind of branch of forensic pathology, is emerging. It investigates what has variously been called abusive constitutionalism, stealth authoritarianism, constitutional coups, autocratic legalism, abuse of the constitution, or twisting and turning of the rule of law. The forms these pathologies take are interesting and various, and I commend them to those with a taste for dark arts. Many of them are analyzed as they occur under many new populist regimes in a volume co-edited by Adam Czarnota, Wojciech Sadurski, and me.[7] I commend that too. ◁

1) See, for example, Martin Krygier, "The Rule of Law: Pasts, Presents, and Two Possible Futures," *Annual Review of Law & Social Science,* 12, 2016, 199–229.
2) Wojciech Sadurski, *A Pandemic of Populists,* Cambridge University Press, 2022, 54.
3) Tarunabh Khaitan, "Killing a Constitution with a Thousand Cuts: Executive Aggrandizement and Party-state Fusion in India," *Law & Ethics of Human Rights* 14(1), 2020, 49–95.
4) Rosalind Dixon and David Landau, *Abusive Constitutional Borrowing. Legal globalization and the subversion of liberal democracy,* Oxford University Press, 2021.
5) See Gianluigi Palombella, 'The Abuse of the Rule of Law,' *Hague Journal on the Rule of Law,* 12, 2020, 387–397.
6) Khaitan, n.2, 45.
7) Martin Krygier, Adam Czarnota, and Wojciech Sadurski, eds., *Anti-Constitutional Populism,* Cambridge University Press, 2022. See also Sadurski, *A Pandemic of Populists.*

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Rule *by* Law and the Making of Authoritarian Democracies

BY RAJSHREE CHANDRA

Using India as a case study, political scientist Rajshree Chandra conceives of the legal policy of authoritarian regimes as a shift from the rule of law to rule by *law.*

Rule of law is one of the foundational ideals of contemporary political morality and of modern liberal democracies. Its ascendancy as a system of rules, formal equality, institutions, and checks and balances was designed as a counter to arbitrary, despotic rule. It symbolizes, to use a Weberian term, the rationalization of the legal system where law operates independently of the influence of power, political forces, and ethics in society.

This article seeks to understand a mutation in the rule of law project, with India as a case study, in which an increasing gap between the rule of law and rule *by* law becomes a factor in the fashioning of modern ethno-democracies and/or authoritarian democracies. Rule *by* law alludes to a process where law, rather than being a check on arbitrary power, becomes a tool—a technology of control to perpetuate power and bypass democratic controls.

I classify this technology of control into three categories: constitutional-legal, legal-exceptional, and extra-legal. The article discusses how rule of law is subverted at each of these levels, and used as a technology of control rather than as an instrument of checks and balances that prevents the authoritarian conduct of power.

Photo: Anupam Nath / AP / picturedesk.com

Ibrahim Khalil, 23, a student protesting against the Citizenship Amendment Act in Gauhati, India, December 27, 2019.

Constitutional-Legal

The conduct of authoritarianism needs "enemies" of the nation and people marked as "outsiders." The threat of enemies justifies the aggrandizement of majoritarian power. Further, opposing an enemy translates into support for and loyalty to the sovereign as the protector, the savior, and the restorer of pride and greatness. From here begins an ever-evolving partnership between masses and demagogues. It is much easier to absorb individuals into a mass of like-minded people once you dig into their deprivations, give it a name, find a scapegoat, and reinforce and weaponize the biases they already harbor. Let me cite two examples.

In 2019, the Citizenship Amendment Act, accompanied by the creation of the National Register of Citizens, delivered a deathly blow to India's secular social fabric. For the first time since independence, religion became a criterion of citizenship. While the act, formally at least, only excludes those deemed illegal Muslim migrants, what it elliptically and insidiously does is to cast a shroud of doubt on many legal, valid Muslims citizens of India. It perpetuates the narrative that: (I) *only* Islamic countries are intolerant towards their minorities and; (II) that India is not a natural home to Muslims and that they are unworthy citizens and unequal applicants. It provides the air of legitimacy that stokes the fires of hatred and prejudice playing out on every forum and platform available against these deemed enemies of the nation.

In the constitutional-legal category, there are also statutory laws that aid and abet the criminalization of dissent, a feature critical to the project of authoritarianism as it defines the limits of citizen's conduct. It is important to note two aspects of this.

First, free-speech restrictions dissolve the distinction between the public and the private by subjecting the private conduct of speech—Facebook, Twitter, articles, books, op-eds, drawings, art, cartoons—to surveillance and sovereign scrutiny. The separation of the public and private, especially of public and private morality, was a foundational move of modern liberal democracies. A reversal of this reveals how authoritarian regimes mimic their colonial masters and re-enact colonial genealogies. The intent of law in both instances was and is to quell dissent, discipline native subjects, and, very importantly, to divide and rule through selective and arbitrary application of law.

Second, drawing from Ajay Skaria,[1] implicit in the way in which free-speech regulatory laws operate is the colonizer's mentality—that "subject-citizens" are not "rational citizens" who can be trusted to follow the protocols of a rational public sphere. They may have, to quote Skaria, "weak and vacillating" minds and therefore the "speech of free men should modulate itself to deal with the volatility of ordinary citizens." With the legal structure and jurisprudence making space for private feelings—hate, offense, morality, enmity—its governance in the post-colony mimics and affirms the subject status of both the dissenter and the defender, the offender and offended.

In essence, what free-speech restrictions do is to establish sovereign authority over what is "reasonable" and rational in the public sphere, what need not and cannot be private. As sovereign authority is established over these spheres and the conduct of law becomes less autonomous, less formal, less equal, and less objective.

Legal-Exceptional

The conduct of authoritarian power cannot leave the question of "dissent" and dissenting speech at the doorstep of *only* "ordinary law." It therefore sets up a network of *exceptional laws,* prima facie to check terror, internal strife of a violent destabilizing nature, civil war, and threats to national security. What exceptional laws do is to create, as Giorgio Agamben terms, "states of exceptions," which enables the state to "legally" strip a person of legal protections that are available to other citizens.[2] What makes them "exceptional" is that they are an exception to ordinary law where constitutional remedies are available to those charged.

There are a plethora of exceptional laws in India. Anti-terror laws like the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA), the Public Safety Act, and the National Security Act, to name a few, are increasingly used to incarcerate political opponents, journalists, civil rights activists, and human rights lawyers, and to make them socially disposable.[3] The 2019 *Watali* judgment makes bail a virtual impossibility for those accused under the UAPA. The numerous bail rejections for those accused in relation to the Bhima-Koregaon and Delhi riots of 2020 is a case in point. The National Crime Records Bureau data reveals a 33 percent jump in UAPA cases between 2014 and 2020. But what is more damning is that very few of these cases even reach the stage where innocence or guilt is proven. In this seven-year period, only 4.5 percent of the 6,900 cases sent for trial reached the stage of completion. And we are not yet talking of cases that languish in protracted pre-trial and trial period: 95.4 percent of cases were still pending trial at the end of each year between 2014 and 2020.

The purpose of such arbitrary "trial without a trial" is no longer justice, where the guilty are punished and the innocent are set free. It is rather to convert the law into a tool of sustained suppression of citizens who are thinking, questioning, and dissenting a little more than the state is willing to tolerate. It is meant to "teach" those who talk back just how fragile the edifice of their constitutional rights is, and just how socially disposable their enfranchised lives are. These extraordinary laws are fast becoming a permanent state of exception where the state suspends the rule of law in the exercise of its powers. This is a deployment that will always have the potential to transform democracies into authoritarian states.

Extra-Legal

Extra-legal modes operate in the obscure space between legality and illegality. Not expressly sanctioned by the law or its agencies, the shadowy arm of law insidiously backs and assists, aiding and abetting the routinized deployment of majoritarian violence. Examples include the police not registering cases, not filing "first information reports," ignoring open calls for violence, and conducting communally biased inquiries, as well as a myriad other instances where law-enforcement agencies authorize the impunity of vigilantes and self-proclaimed caretakers of the Hindu-first nation.

This is the process of *informalization* that Nobert Elias draws our attention to.[4] The *perception* that loss of relative status and pride, failure to "progress," and failure to revert to the "fantasy position" is because of the "enemy" leads to loss of self-control and willingness to embrace violence. The latter cannot happen unless the legal system is willing to look the other way and unless impunity is authorized. In that sense, informalization is not just the breaking down or loosening of norms of behavior but the informalization of rule of law itself.

Conclusion

Stephen Holmes argues that one of the modes through which the rule of law is subverted or diminished is when "repressive and acquisitive elites," "bullies and plunderers" keep the structure of law deliberately unclear, ambiguous, and fluid. Law becomes predictable for the sovereign but unpredictable and "maddeningly erratic" for the citizens. What looks on paper like an impartial system behaves in practice like a "dual state." What looks on paper as the rule *of* law functions as a rule *by* law. ◁

1) Ajay Skaria, "Questions of Hurt," Economic & Political Weekly, Vol. 49, No 40, October 4, 2014.
2) Giorgio Agamben, *State of Exception,* University of Chicago Press, 2005.
3) To render people socially disposable implies removing them from the network of relations that sustain citizens as social beings. It implies, as Henry Giroux suggests, that disposable persons/population do not deserve to live. See, Henry Giroux, "Memories of Hope in the Age of Disposability," *Journal of Advanced Composition,* 2013, Vol. 33, No. 1/2 (2013), pp. 65–84.
4) Norbert Elias, *The Germans: Power Struggles and the Development of Habitus in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries,* ed. Michael Schroeter, trans. Eric Dunning and Stephen Mennell. New York: Columbia University Press, 1996.

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Some Preliminary Notes on the Cultural Life of Democracy

BY HARSHANA RAMBUKWELLA

Harshana Rambukwella explores the notion of "cultural life" as an alternative conceptual and methodological heuristic to understand the diversity of democratic practice.

Photo: AntanO / CC BY-SA 4.0 / commons.wikimedia.org

Anti-government protest in Sri Lanka on April, 13, 2022 in front of the Presidential Secretariat.

Democratic theorization has been long associated with Eurocentrism. My attempt here is to explore the notion of cultural life as an alternative conceptual and methodological heuristic to understand the diversity of democratic practice. It differs from existing attempts at alternative understandings of democracy by avoiding the repudiation of norms as inherently Eurocentric. At the same time, I am suspicious of alternative accounts of democracy that romanticize putatively non-European practices as more emancipatory. The reflections I offer here are also informed by recent events in Sri Lanka, and are preliminary and contingent—I sketch what the cultural life of democracy more in terms of what it is not, rather than what it is.

The past few months in Sri Lanka have been surreal. A country classified as middle-income is now facing economic oblivion. But, amid this narrative of national catastrophe, Sri Lanka also bore witness to a spectacular people's uprising called the *aragalaya* (struggle) that succeeded in forcing the resignations of the president, the prime minister, and several cabinets. Perhaps the most significant achievement of the *aragalaya* was undermining the Rajapaksa political dynasty, which had perfected a toxic mix of crony capitalism, majoritarian racism, and impunity to build a seemingly unshakable political edifice. However, within weeks of the resignation of President Gotabaya Rajapaksa, the discredited political order reasserted itself. His successor, Ranil Wickramasinghe, unleashed systematic repression through mass arrests and at the same time strategically promoted an instrumental discourse about the rule of law and safeguarding the state from anarchy. Wickramasinghe is also a patrician politician who has little popular legitimacy, which makes his repression all the more bitter for those who struggled for a culture of political accountability.

I begin with this anecdote because it speaks to the complexities of mapping out what the term cultural life of democracy might encompass. Sri Lanka's democratic trajectory does not fit neatly within terms such as ethnocracy or illiberal democracy. Ethnocracy is a term that speaks to how Sri Lanka's representative democratic system has enabled a culture of majoritarianism, and illiberalism captures the paradox of a country that regularly exercises universal franchise but where people remain disenfranchised. But, while both these terms delineate something of Sri Lanka's democratic dilemmas, they do not tell the whole story.

The country is often positioned as a model colony that saw a peaceful transition to independence. The rest of this narrative is one in which this democratic promise has been squandered. The predominant image of Sri Lanka today is that of a failed state. Much of this discourse also centers on the failure of democratic institutions and processes as well as the lack of active citizenship and the dominance of patron-client relationships. Instances of patron-clientelism in the Global South are often associated with the persistence of pre-modern culture. Such critical assessments also hold that normative features of democracy are insufficiently realized in societies that are democratically deficient. These assessments are informed by what Dipesh Chakrabarty calls "hyperreal Europe," where Europe functions as a universal referent. Partha Chatterjee characterizes this as a norm-deviation model. Chatterjee argues that an ahistorical normative democratic model is associated with "hyperreal Europe," which in turn shapes the negative evaluation of non-European societies.

The dominance of this normative model has led to a number of attempts to understand democracy in relation to non-European social experience. These include drawing on the practice of *adda* in Calcutta society as a form of public sphere, rethinking democracy from the margins in Chile where the isolated Chachapoyas region has historically resisted modernity, and examining Islamic forms of democratic participation in Arab societies. Collectively, these can be understood as forms of alternative democratic participation. Chatterjee's distinction between civil and political society also deals with this complexity. In many postcolonial societies, Chatterjee argues, there are significant parts of the population that exist outside the legal structures that inform civil society but are recognized by the state. There can also be exceptions to the notion of equal citizenship, such as in the case of the "scheduled castes" in India.

However, the question that then emerges is to what extent such exceptions can be recognized as democratic. When do they violate the spirit of democracy? This is also a question posed by populism. For instance, populist authoritarianisms the world over have presented themselves as alternatives. In Europe this has manifested itself as a populist challenge to liberal democracy. In South and Southeast Asia the discourse of Asian values has led to instrumental justifications of electorally sanctioned authoritarianism. It is here that an approach like that of the cultural life can lend itself to the rationalization of undemocratic forms of political life. There is a risk that the moral exceptionalism often accompanying the critique of Eurocentrism tips over into an uncritical justification of illiberal politics. This is visible, for instance, in how Chatterjee neatly maps the norm-deviation model onto an East-West binary. However, as these brief references to Asia and Europe suggest, this binary may be more apparent than real. There needs to be recognition that democracy as a practice takes a wide variety of forms and that even so-called mature democracies rarely follow an ideal script.

There are perhaps alternative ways of conceptualizing such variations in democratic practice that do not align the discussion along essentialist binaries such as civil society versus political society or the East versus the West. One way in which this might be done is through what the anthropologist Jonathan Spencer has called "actually existing politics." The cultural life of democracy is an attempt to do so by looking at how culture, defined in a very broad sense, plays a vital constitutive role in politics and at the same time by exploring how "actually existing politics" can take diverse cultural forms.

In conclusion, I would like to return to Sri Lanka. The past few months in the country have challenged many preconceptions. A society that was thought to lack a civic consciousness staged a spectacular people's uprising. Within this uprising there were also many moments where Sri Lanka's protracted history of ethnic and religious enmity as well as of social divisions based on class, caste, and gender were transcended. While the uprising was undoubtedly underwritten by the extreme economic precarity that is gripping the country, it was not economic rationality alone that brought people to the streets. Yet, a few weeks after the uprising, it seemed that politics as usual was reasserting itself as a corrupt political order rallied and regained power. However, even as this unfolded, a fresh and ongoing discourse emerged in Sri Lanka about legality versus legitimacy. While the current president was appointed within the recognized legal-constitutional framework, his legitimacy has been seriously questioned, as has that of the parliament. This in turn has resulted in an intense and widespread discussion about the meaning and intent of democracy, and of whether the existing representative democratic system is fit for purpose or a more hybrid model with space for direct citizen's involvement in governance is necessary.

What this moment in Sri Lanka's political history suggests is that democracy is a work in progress—conceptually and procedurally—and that the analytical work envisaged in the cultural life of democracy can help further nuance our understanding of democracy as a lived political practice. The cultural life of democracy as a conceptual and methodological heuristic has no distinct "shape" at the moment, but it can be tentatively understood as a contingent orientation towards democracy that recognizes that democratic practice takes plural forms and that at a fundamental level democracy is an agonistic negotiation between "'the will of the people" and an ethical imperative towards social justice. ◁

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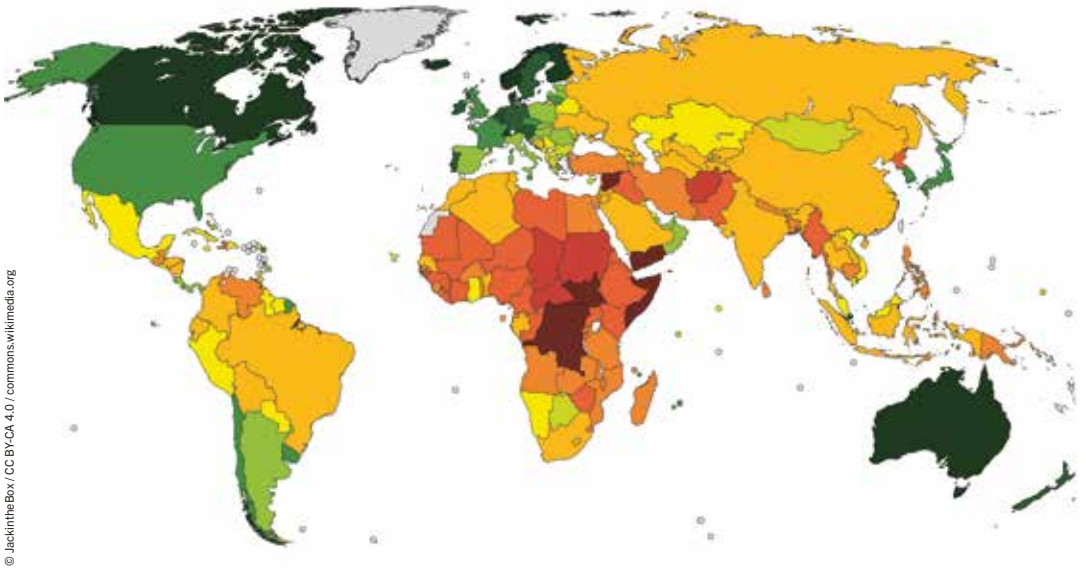
Fragile States/Societies: Global Politics of Hierarchy and Intervention

BY KEITH KRAUSE

The political discourse on state fragility has become a prominent feature of contemporary international development assistance and interventions. What kinds of policies and politics does it make possible, and what does it conceal or obscure about current geopolitical and economic realities?



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Choropleth map showing countries as categorised by the 2019 Fragile States Index.

The political discourse on state fragility has become a prominent feature of contemporary international development assistance and interventions, as reflected in countless statements of the World Bank, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), and international donors. A Google search for "fragile states" or "state fragility" generates almost two million hits and the "Fragile States Index" of the Fund for Peace gets more than 360,000 hits. The OECD's *States of Fragility* report circulates widely in the development community. But what does the language of fragility do: what kinds of policies and politics does it make possible, and what does it conceal or obscure about current geopolitical and economic realities?

The label of fragile state is applied to a host of crisis situations characterized by warfare, subnational violence, economic crises, human rights violations, refugee flows, and at the most extreme a near-total breakdown of state institutions. Places such as Somalia, the former Yugoslavia, Sudan, Haiti, Yemen, or the Democratic Republic of the Congo have appeared high on "league tables" of fragile states. Fragility is measured by such things as the incidence of coups, riots, or political assassinations; levels of corruption and trust in government; or the effective delivery of public services. All of these reflect a certain idea of what a strong state should look like and of how it should behave domestically and internationally.

The exercise is not, however, simply designed to color red zones on a global map or to make rankings; it is to shape the priorities for and allocations of funds and international support, and to facilitate active intervention to save these states from alleged anarchy. The fragile-state discourse, as a form of expert knowledge about the world, has oriented development assistance away from the provision of basic needs and from poverty reduction towards more politically controversial interventions in forms of governance. It has also facilitated the fusion of traditional development concerns with global security concerns. The language of state fragility provides a justification for military intervention in places such as Afghanistan or the Sahel, and it also structures everyday foreign development and security assistance in such areas as public management, reform of security institutions, democracy promotion, and human rights and rule of law. Not all of these effects are deleterious to human development, and the logic of fragility has potentially reduced insecurity and deprivation in some cases, but the language of fragile states is only the most recent in a long line of Western ideas about how to govern the globe—from the imperial *mission civilisatrice* to the description of the Ottoman Empire as the "sick man of Europe" propped up by other great powers, to the League of Nations mandates system. Such terms provide a shared framework to facilitate collective action.

So how does the language of fragility work to achieve these objectives in today's world? What kinds of evidence is marshalled to label and target certain states as fragile, based on claims to authoritatively know how politics, economy, and society work (or not) in these countries? Unlike previous political classifications, today's discourse of fragile states is data-driven and ostensibly neutral and objective, an exercise in measurement to develop an early-warning methodology that would identify key drivers of fragility and crisis thresholds, and to devise particular kinds of interventions. Although the initial impetus was driven by US foreign policy concerns, by the mid-1990s the concept had become a guiding principle for foreign economic assistance and security policies in most Northern donor states and institutions, as well as for the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC), the UN agencies, and the World Bank. The OECD, for example, defined a fragile state as "one unable to meet its population's expectations or manage changes in expectations and capacity through the political process," and measured this via a multidimensional concept of fragility, encompassing economic, environmental, political, societal, and security dimensions. The World Bank's initial focus on purely economic issues—macroeconomic policy, sustainable and equitable growth, reducing inequality and public-sector management—has broadened to include explicitly political factors such as voice and accountability, political stability, violence or terrorism, rule of law, and control of corruption.

There is, however, a curious logic at work here: are these causes, symptoms or consequences of being in a fragile state? The very indicators used to assess fragility also serve to describe and define it—as if the symptoms of a disease were also descriptions of its causes. Is a high level of corruption a cause of political unrest and instability or low growth, or does the political system operate in such a way to generate embedded corruption? If we cannot distinguish the direction of the causal arrow, then the proposed remedies risk being ineffective.

Second, the language of fragile states follows a double-edged logic. On one hand, it acknowledges that many obstacles to economic development go beyond considerations of violent interstate conflict or of civil war to include forms of internal insecurity and large-scale subnational violence that threaten the well-being or security of the population, including state repression. This follows the logic of human security and puts the well-being of the population at the center. At the same time, however, the way in which fragility is operationalized mainly revolves around one of two axes: low-income countries that have weak institutions for dealing with political conflicts and contestation, or large-scale violence. As a result, virtually every prominent fragile state either is in sub-Saharan Africa or has recently experienced war. Practically speaking, the means that states in regions such as Central America (El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras, for example) that experience extremely high levels of violence and state capture by criminalized elites are not given sufficient attention by international policy and development assistance.

Behind the numbers and rankings lies an interesting metaphor. What exactly is fragility? Like notions such as resilience or proliferation, it is a concept imported from another domain, not an intrinsic property of a social system or a state. It applies to everyday objects, such as glass, that are easily subject to breakage from an external shock. In common parlance an object can either be intrinsically fragile (like a delicate vase) or brittle because of shocks that have created cracks. In both cases, one does not really question how such fragility came about, but simply takes measures to prevent breakage.

The idea of fragility as brittleness, however, largely places the responsibility for becoming fragile on local conditions and on governments and national elites. Measuring it through national-level indicators and comparisons ignores broader structural and historical forces shaping the world economy, geopolitical relations, or environmental change that place certain states and regions—such as most of sub-Saharan Africa—in a subordinate position in the global hierarchy. Many of these countries are condemned to struggle against severe economic vulnerability due to dependence on natural-resource exports, for example, or are vulnerable to the ravages of the climate emergency.

By obscuring broader socioeconomic, historical, and political forces, the language of fragility acts as a filter that means certain forms of political turmoil or contestation do not count as fragility, or at least not on a severe scale. Fragility only really exists in comparison with other non-fragile countries and regions, and the thresholds set for what counts as severe fragility reinforce this. Liminal states such as Mexico or those in Central America are considered as facing minor or stable situations in which the risk of fragility tipping over into crisis is relatively low. Western states such as Hungary or Poland, with stable economies but high levels of political polarization and democratic backsliding are seldom regarded as fragile, and many citizens of deprived regions in the United Kingdom or the United States certainly live in endemic precarity and a form of fragility. As any other metaphor that we live by, the concept of fragility reinforces and serves certain interests and preconceptions about the world today. ◁

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Die Weltwirtschaft in unsicheren Zeiten

VON JOSEPH STIGLITZ

Mit einem Vortrag des Nobelpreisträgers Joseph Stiglitz wurde am 27. September im Kuppelsaal der TU Wien das Vienna Humanities Festival *2022 feierlich eröffnet. In seiner Rede, die hier in gekürzter Fassung vorgestellt wird, gab Stiglitz seiner Überzeugung Ausdruck, dass zur Bewältigung der globalen Herausforderungen unserer Zeit eine Abkehr vom Neoliberalismus unerlässlich ist.*

Der Krieg

Putins Angriffskrieg gegen die Ukraine stellt einen Verstoß gegen das Völkerrecht dar. Ich fand die Entschlossenheit, mit der Europa, die Vereinigten Staaten und andere Länder dieser Aggression entgegentraten, sehr ermutigend, aber ich bin in vielerlei Hinsicht enttäuscht. Europa und die Vereinigten Staaten haben nicht so reagiert, als handele es sich um einen Krieg, bei dem für unsere Demokratien und die internationale Rechtsstaatlichkeit viel auf dem Spiel steht. Wie wären wir vorgegangen, hätten wir erkannt, worum es bei diesem Krieg geht? Zwei Aspekte möchte ich in diesem Zusammenhang hervorheben.

Erstens ist die Friedenswirtschaft für Kriegszeiten nicht geeignet. Märkte funktionieren nicht gut unter Zeitdruck, und Zeit ist im Krieg ein sehr wichtiger Faktor. Interessanterweise erkannten die Vereinigten Staaten im Kampf gegen Covid-19, dass sie sich nicht auf die Märkte verlassen konnten. Sie verfügen seit Jahrzehnten über ein Gesetz (*Defense Production Act,* 1950), das die Regierung im Kriegsfall dazu ermächtigt, Firmen die Herstellung bestimmter Produkte anzuordnen. Der Kampf gegen Covid-19 wurde als Krieg interpretiert, und Unternehmen wurde daher befohlen, Beatmungsgeräte herzustellen.

Von Anfang an war klar, dass es einen Atomkrieg zu vermeiden gilt, daher haben wir wirtschaftliche Sanktionen eingesetzt. Die Sanktionen gegen Exporte nach Russland waren sehr wirksam und werden mit der Zeit noch wirksamer werden. Aber die Sanktionen gegen russische Exporte stellen auch ein Problem dar, weil die Abhängigkeit Europas vom russischen Gas sehr groß ist. Es war völlig offensichtlich, dass Russland kein zuverlässiger Handelspartner ist, und dass diese Fehleinschätzung nicht nur wirtschaftliche, sondern auch politische Folgen haben würde. Als Reaktion auf die Einsicht, dass die Verhängung effektiver Sanktionen den Energiepreis in die Höhe treiben wird, hätte ein massiver und globaler Kraftakt zur Erzeugung grüner Energie unternommen werden müssen, um die Nachfrage nach Öl und Gas zu senken. Mittlerweile sind die Energiepreise so stark gestiegen, dass die Sanktionen Geld in Putins Kassen spülen.

Hätten wir erkannt, worum es bei diesem Krieg geht, hätten wir in einer weiteren Hinsicht anders

Photo: vogus / IWM

Joseph Stiglitz beim Eröffnungsvortrag des *Vienna Humanities Festival* im Kuppelsaal der TU Wien, 27. September 2022.

agiert. Das europäische Stromversorgungssystem geriet sehr stark in den Bann des Neoliberalismus. Es wurde in einer Weise dereguliert, dass der Strompreis von der Energiequelle mit den höchsten Kosten abhängig ist, und das war, nach Steigen der Gaspreise, das Gas. Diese Form der Deregulierung hatten wir in Kalifornien ausprobiert. Es kam zu Engpässen und die Preise schnellten in die Höhe. Über die Ursache dafür wurde viel diskutiert und schließlich stellten wir fest, dass die Deregulierung den Strommarkt anfällig für Manipulationen machte. Sobald Kalifornien einen gut regulierten Strommarkt hatte, gab es auch keine Engpässe mehr.

Ich hoffe, dass Europa seine Lektion schnell lernt und seine Politik ändert. Es wurden einige Maßnahmen ergriffen, aber sie kommen zu spät und sind zu wenig ambitioniert. Zum Beispiel hat man sich endlich dazu durchgerungen, eine Zufallsgewinnsteuer einzuführen, aber sie erfasst nur die Produktion fossiler Brennstoffe, während der Handel ausgenommen bleibt. Die Riesengewinne haben jedoch mit dem Stromhandel zu tun.

Inflation und Zinserhöhungen

Die meisten Phasen hoher Inflation in den letzten vier Jahrzehnten waren auf einen Nachfrageüberhang zurückzuführen. Zur Gegensteuerung verfügen wir über ein sehr gutes Instrument, die Erhöhung der Zinssätze. Mittels Zinserhöhung werden die Investitionen und die Gesamtnachfrage gesenkt und somit Angebot und Nachfrage ins Gleichgewicht gebracht. Es gibt jedoch keinen Hinweis darauf, dass die Gesamtnachfrage heute die eigentliche Ursache des Problems ist. Eine Anhebung der Zinssätze wird die strukturellen Angebotsprobleme, die die Inflation befeuern, nicht lösen, sondern zu einem wirtschaftlichen Abschwung führen.

Bedauerlicherweise ist die Anhebung der Zinssätze als Reaktion auf Inflation in die DNA der Zentralbanker:innen eingeschrieben. Sie wissen nicht, wie sie sich anders verhalten sollen. Sie glauben, dass sie Überzeugung und Entschlossenheit demonstrieren müssen. Wir könnten Glück haben und der Krieg geht zu Ende, eine größere Menge von Lebensmitteln wird verfügbar und die Inflation geht zurück. Aber wir könnten auch Pech haben. Der Krieg könnte lange dauern und die Pandemie in China ebenfalls. Es könnte weiterhin Probleme auf der Angebotsseite geben. Und dann werden die Zentralbanken die Zinssätze weiter anheben, und zwar so lange, bis die Arbeitslosigkeit hoch genug ist, um die Inflation zu senken. Doch der Preis dafür wird ein tiefgreifender wirtschaftlicher Abschwung sein.

Die neue globale Ordnung

Selbst wenn wir diesen schrecklichen Krieg hinter uns gelassen haben, wird die Welt eine andere sein. Ob es uns gefällt oder nicht, und ob es nun rational ist oder nicht, es gibt in den Vereinigten Staaten einen Konsens, dass China eine Bedrohung darstellt. Dieser Druck führt zu wirtschaftlicher und politischer Entflechtung. Für Europa und die Länder des Südens wird dies schwierig werden.

In diesem neuen kalten Krieg wird es vor allem darum gehen, die Gunst der Menschen im globalen Süden für sich zu gewinnen. Leider haben wir diesen Kampf bisher nicht besonders geschickt geführt. Während der Pandemie haben wir eine schreckliche Impfstoff-Apartheid gepflegt. Wir hatten Zugang zu Impfstoffen, Menschen in Entwicklungsländern nicht. Indien und Südafrika, die zur Herstellung von Impfstoffen in der Lage gewesen wären, durften dies aufgrund von Patenten auf geistiges Eigentum nicht tun. Obwohl wir keine ausreichenden Impfstoffmengen produzieren konnten, lautete die Antwort: „Nein". Wir haben den Profit über das Leben der Menschen gestellt. Russland ging deutlich besser vor. Es gab seinen Sputnik-Impfstoff ab. China hat dasselbe getan. Beide haben erkannt, dass es die Gunst der Menschen im globalen Süden zu gewinnen gilt. Das hat die globale Geopolitik beeinflusst. Die Unterstützung für die Ukraine im Süden ist bemerkenswert schwach. Wir zahlen einen hohen Preis für unsere Fehler.

Die neoliberale Wirtschaft und ihre Alternative

Jeder, der die Entwicklung der neoliberalen Wirtschaft in den letzten Jahrzehnten verfolgt hat, muss kritisch sein. Die Ära des Neoliberalismus war durch ein langsameres Wachstum gekennzeichnet, und fast der größte Teil dieses Wachstums kam den Reichsten zugute. Dadurch entstand jene Ungleichheit, die Demagogen das Feld bereitet hat. Und eine Krise folgte der anderen. In den Vereinigten Staaten ist das deutlich spürbar: die Opioid-Krise, die Kinderdiabetes-Krise, die Ungleichheitskrise, die Klimakrise usw.

Als Wirtschaftstheoretiker habe ich mich oft mit der Frage beschäftigt, warum das Verfolgen von Eigeninteressen – wie durch eine „unsichtbare Hand" – zum Wohlergehen der Gesellschaft führen sollte. Adam Smiths „unsichtbare Hand" ist unsichtbar, weil sie nicht existiert. Das Verfolgen von Eigeninteressen, die Gier, führt nicht zum Wohl der Gesellschaft.

Wir müssen ein besseres Gleichgewicht herstellen. Nicht nur zwischen dem privaten und dem öffentlichen Sektor, sondern auch zwischen einer breiten Palette von Institutionen, gemeinnützigen Organisationen und Genossenschaften. Unsere Institutionen prägen uns.

Es ist erwiesen, dass die Menschen im Bankwesen im Durchschnitt egoistischer und unaufrichtiger sind als jene in anderen Sektoren. Die Fokussierung auf Geld formt den Charakter. Das Gleiche gilt für Ökonom:innen. Die Wirtschaftswissenschaften ziehen Studierende an, die gieriger und egoistischer sind als andere. Und je länger sie studieren, desto gieriger und egoistischer werden sie. Wir formen unsere Studierenden und sie werden so, wie die unseren Analysen vorausgehenden Annahmen es besagen, nämlich egoistisch, eigennützig und gierig. Und so wiederum sehen wir unsere Annahmen über Menschen bestätigt.

Die Alternative wäre das, was ich einen progressiven Kapitalismus nenne. Demokratie ist ein wichtiger Bestandteil davon. Hier stünde das in die Gesellschaft eingebettete Individuum im Mittelpunkt. Die Individuen sollen nicht der Wirtschaft dienen, sondern die Wirtschaft den Individuen und der gesamten Gesellschaft. So könnte gemeinsamer Wohlstand, verstanden als Wohlergehen des Einzelnen in einem umfassenden, über das Materielle hinausgehenden Sinne, entstehen. ◁

Der vorliegende Text ist eine gekürzte und adaptierte Fassung des Vortrags. Übersetzung Evangelos Karagiannis.

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China's Exploitation of Europe's Western Balkans Flank

BY VALBONA ZENELI

The geostrategic position of the Western Balkans as a bridgehead to the European Union is very important for China's economic expansion in Europe and a key corridor for its Belt and Road Initiative. In the region, China has focused not only on trade and investment but also on soft power to influence the public opinion. While China's increased influence is not viewed as a counter-option to the EU aspirations of the region, its state-led economic model could challenge the EU's normative power and undermine the democratic reformist agenda.

China is not a newcomer in the Western Balkans but its recent activities there have laid the groundwork for a long-term, multifaceted, and ever-deeper presence. Five out the six Western Balkan countries (Kosovo being the exception) were included in the 16+1 initiative established in 2012 between China and Central and Eastern European countries, and all six are official members of its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Chinese interests in the region are mostly in infrastructure projects and strategic assets, access to natural resources, and new markets in the vicinity of the European Union. The China-Europe Land-Sea Express Route, a component of the BRI, aims to link China with Western Europe via the port of Piraeus in Greece and the infrastructure networks in the Balkans.

The Western Balkans represents a small market of less than 18 million consumers, with a total gross domestic product of $132 billion. This is less than 1 percent of the EU market ($17 trillion). Despite the catch-up growth in last thirty years, the average income per capita in the region is only $7,200, less than 15 percent of the EU average.

Trade between China and the Western Balkans has expanded rapidly, from $3 billion in 2012 to $8 billion in 2021, with 60 percent of this with Serbia. Trade balances are very heavily tilted in favor of China (85 percent), causing large deficits for the region. The EU remains the main partner for the Western Balkans, with over 70 percent of its trade, but China has quickly become the second- or third-largest trade partner for the region's countries.

Chinese investment in the Western Balkans has expanded more than trade, with currently 122 projects with a total estimated value of around $31 billion. This would represent almost 40 percent of the total stock of the foreign direct investment (FDI) in Western Balkan countries—which amounted $86 billion in 2021, according to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development—but the majority of this Chinese money is in loans instead.

The main form of China's economic cooperation in the Western Balkans is concessional lending for infrastructure (mainly in transportation and energy) through its state-owned banks, which is then implemented by Chinese enterprises in nontransparent single-bid contracts. Chinese state-owned enterprises (SOEs) enjoy economies of scale and can offer cheaper prices subsidized from the Chinese government, which allows them to take advantage of the urgent need for infrastructure in the region.

Photo: SAVO PRELEVIC / AFP / picturedesk.com

The bridge section of a highway connecting the city of Bar on Montenegro's Adriatic coast to landlocked neighbor Serbia, near the village of Bioce, north of Montenegrin capital Podgorica, which is being constructed by China Road and Bridge Corporation (CRBC), the large state-owned Chinese company, April 8, 2019.

The region has been a perfect testing ground for Chinese investment in infrastructure and for Chinese SOEs to familiarize themselves with EU standards and regulations regarding public procurement, labor, and the environment. China's first big infrastructure investment project in Europe was the Pupin Bridge in Serbia carried out by the China Road and Bridge Corporation and inaugurated in 2014. The first railway project in Europe by a Chinese SOE using funds from the EU was the 10-kilometer segment of the Kolasin-Kos railway implemented by the China Civil Engineering Construction Corporation in 2017.

Cultivating the Image of a Benign Global Power

The key driver behind China's clout in the region is the promotion of mutually beneficial economic interaction, utilizing its capital as an "economic miracle-maker" to influence public opinion. Beijing's long-term objectives are strategic, political, and increasingly ideological.

China's closer relations with the Western Balkans are managed mainly on a bilateral basis and involve state institutions. While Chinese development money is not transparent, data shows that there have been 197 projects involved between 2000 and 2017. About $1.5 billion of Chinese development aid in the region is spent on projects that range from grants to support public administration, donations for agriculture modernization, schools, Confucius Institutes, debt forgiveness, and trainings—and also police and military cooperation in the cases of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia.

China is heavily investing in soft power, from the Confucius Institutes that are present in every capital of the region, cultural centers, and friendship associations to chambers of commerce and Academies of Science. In addition, the Western Balkans became a stage for Beijing's mask and vaccine diplomacy during the Covid-19 pandemic. China used strong communication campaigns to depict itself as a generous donor and to undermine the EU's credibility.

Political behavior shapes public perception in the Western Balkans. The region's political elites see the presence of China as purely economic and opportunistic, with investments easily aligned with political cycles and coupled with nontransparent procurement decisions. As a result, the majority of people in the region view China favorably, from 85 percent in Serbia to 68 percent in Montenegro, 56 percent in North Macedonia, and 52 percent in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

A Counter-option to the EU Aspirations of the Western Balkans?

Membership in the EU remains the main aspiration in the Western Balkans, with 60 percent of citizens being positive about the prospects of their countries joining the EU, although the accession process is burdened with the uncertainties of "enlargement fatigue" and "reform fatigue." China's increased influence could in the long term negatively affect these prospects. While Beijing publicly supports the EU integration of the Western Balkans, its state-led economic model could challenge the EU's normative power and undermine the democratic reformist agenda in the region.

The EU's revised accession methodology, divided into six negotiation clusters, puts an even stronger focus on fundamental values, rule of law, and economic criteria. Human rights principles are key to democracy and at the core of the EU principles and institutions, and on these China's standards deviate from those of the EU. The Western Balkans score low in this area, with some even showing downward trends.

Corruption is another big challenge. Inflows of Chinese financing lack transparency and accountability and can threaten good governance. China ranks 66th out of 180 countries in Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index, and several countries in the region have registered big declines in their score in recent years. Chinese infrastructure projects also hinder improvement in public procurement as laws are bypassed and projects are implemented through bilateral government agreements and under special laws without any transparency. China is also funding coal-plant projects in the Western Balkans, which runs contrary to the EU's goals for the region. This allows governments to avoid costly EU environmental standards in the short run but undermines the future of the region.

China's injection of money for infrastructure projects, lacking due diligence, is burdening some governments in the region with large debt obligations. Unsustainable deals and sovereign-guarantee risks owned by host countries threaten to trap them in debt servitude to China. Montenegro is the most exposed of the Western Balkans countries as Chinese lending makes up 27 percent of its foreign debt and 22 percent of its GDP. The foreign debt figure for North Macedonia is 16 percent, 13 percent for Serbia, and 8 percent for Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The Western Balkans needs EU-driven economic development with more access to the EU market and serious financial support for infrastructure, innovation, and industrial development. As the largest investor and donor in the Western Balkans, the EU should also incorporate China-specific mechanisms in its enlargement policy, demand increased transparency and scrutiny of Chinese projects, and support the introduction of screening mechanisms on the EU model. In the long run, EU investment in the Western Balkans will be crucial for the security of the continent. ◁

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Der Westbalkan, die Ukraine und die EU: Zwei Vorschläge

VON KRISTOF BENDER

Die Länder des Westbalkans stecken seit Jahren im EU-Beitrittsprozess fest. Auch der Ukraine und Moldau, die sich dieses Jahr beworben haben, wird es so ergehen. Die EU kann das ändern, indem sie diesen Ländern ein glaubhaftes, konkretes, aus eigener Kraft erreichbares Ziel in Aussicht stellt.

Der EU-Beitrittsprozess funktioniert nicht mehr. Der Grund dafür liegt in der Kombination von zwei unbestrittenen Tatsachen:

Erstens muss der Beitrittsprozess glaubwürdig und meritokratisch sein, um zu funktionieren. Er muss ein attraktives, erreichbares Ziel sein, dessen Verwirklichung von der Leistung der Beitrittsländer abhängt. Auf diese Weise hat der Prozess in der Vergangenheit eine entscheidende Rolle bei der Transformation Osteuropas gespielt, von Estland bis Rumänien.

Zweitens vertreten heute mehrere EU-Mitgliedstaaten die Ansicht, dass die EU sich selbst reformieren und ihre Verträge ändern muss, bevor sie neue Mitglieder aufnehmen kann. Dies ist aber ein schwieriger und langwieriger Prozess, der Jahre dauern wird.

Diese beiden Tatsachen sind unvereinbar. Wenn es ungewiss ist, wann und ob die EU selbst wieder bereit ist, neue Mitglieder aufzunehmen, kann der Prozess nicht meritokratisch und glaubwürdig sein. Diese Unvereinbarkeit erklärt die Hauptprobleme des Beitrittsprozesses.

Erstens: Wenn Länder nicht vorankommen, selbst wenn sie Ergebnisse vorweisen können, wird ihre Motivation, anspruchsvolle und harte Reformen durchzuführen, untergraben. Dies schwächt die Position von Reformer:innen und stärkt die Glaubwürdigkeit von Euroskeptiker:innen, die behaupten, die EU meine es sowieso nicht ernst.

Zweitens: Die Kosten für Blockaden von Beitrittsländern aus bilateralen Gründen, die nichts mit den Beitrittskriterien zu tun haben, sind gering. Wer in der EU eine wichtige Entscheidung blockiert, muss normalerweise damit rechnen, in anderen Fragen auf weniger Unterstützung anderer Mitgliedsstaaten zählen zu können. In diesem Fall jedoch sind mehrere Mitglieder (stillschweigend) froh, dass sich nichts bewegt, sodass die tatsächlichen Kosten für solche bilateralen Blockaden vernachlässigbar bleiben.

Drittens: Diese Blockaden fügten dem Prozess dramatischen Schaden zu. Die Führung Nordmazedoniens investierte viel politisches Kapital, um den langjährigen bilateralen Namensstreit mit Griechenland beizulegen. Anstatt Beitrittsverhandlungen folgten dann aber weitere Blockaden, erst von Frankreich, dann von Bulgarien. Das Signal ist fatal: Selbst wer sich kompromisslos für die europäische Option einsetzt, kommt am Ende nicht weiter.

Photo: Markus Schreiber / AP / picturedesk.com

Zoran Zaev, damals Premierminister von Nordmazedonien, wird 2018 mit militärischen Ehren in Berlin empfangen. Noch heute wartet das Land auf die Eröffnung des ersten Verhandlungskapitels im Rahmen des EU-Beitrittsprozesses.

Infolgedessen hat der Beitrittsprozess aufgehört zu funktionieren. Dreizehn Jahre nachdem die Europäische Kommission zum ersten Mal festgestellt hat, dass Nordmazedonien alle Kriterien für die Aufnahme von Beitrittsverhandlungen erfüllt, hat dieses Land noch immer kein einziges Verhandlungskapitel eröffnet. Zehn Jahre nach Aufnahme der Verhandlungen hat Montenegro nur drei von 35 Kapiteln geschlossen. Alle Beitrittsländer stecken fest. Nicht einmal die am weitesten fortgeschrittenen Länder haben derzeit eine glaubwürdige Aussicht auf Mitgliedschaft.

Das gleiche Schicksal erwartet die Ukraine und Moldau, die im Juni 2022 in Rekordtempo Kandidatenstatus erhielten. Wenn sich am Prozess nichts ändert, beginnt auch für sie ein ewiges Warten auf eine Unzahl von symbolischen Schritten, die erfunden wurden, um den Prozess in die Länge zu ziehen. Ohne einen meritokratischen Prozess und ein glaubwürdiges Ziel wird auch ihr Enthusiasmus bald schwinden.

Solange einige Mitgliedstaaten darauf beharren, vor der Aufnahme neuer Mitglieder interne Reformen durchzuführen, werden diese Probleme bestehen bleiben. Die Frage für die EU und alle, die an ein geeintes Europa glauben, lautet: Wie kann der Prozess trotzdem wieder in Gang gebracht werden? Wie kann er wieder zu einem echten Transformationsprozess werden, wie in früheren Erweiterungsrunden? Hier zwei konkrete Vorschläge.

Mitgliedschaft für Montenegro

Die EU kündigt an, sich darauf vorzubereiten, Montenegro Anfang 2026 als Vollmitglied in die EU aufzunehmen, sofern die Europäische Kommission zum Schluss kommt, dass das Land in allen Bereichen ein „gutes Vorbereitungsniveau" (good level of preparation) erreicht hat.

Die Slowakei benötigte 34 Monate von der Eröffnung bis zum Abschluss der Beitrittsverhandlungen. Montenegro hat bereits alle Kapitel geöffnet. Warum sollte es nicht möglich sein, alle innerhalb von 24 Monaten abzuschließen? Wenn wir 15 Monate für die Ratifizierung einrechnen, wäre ein Beitritt Anfang 2026 möglich. Dieses ambitionierte Ziel alleine wäre ein starkes, dringend benötigtes Signal, dass es immer noch möglich ist, der EU beizutreten; ein Signal, dass es sich lohnt, an diesem Prozess ernsthaft teilzunehmen.

Montenegro diese Chance zu bieten wäre kein Geschenk. Um beizutreten, müsste das Land ja alle Kriterien erfüllen. Mit 620.000 Einwohnern ist Montenegro sehr klein. Sein Beitritt, einschließlich der erforderlichen EU-Fonds, würde sehr wenig kosten. Vor dem Austritt Großbritanniens gab es schon 28 EU-Mitgliedstaaten. Es wären keine institutionellen Änderungen erforderlich.

Eine solche Ankündigung wäre also machbar. Sie würde zeigen, dass die EU es ernst meint mit der „europäischen Zukunft für den westlichen Balkan". Sie würde aber nicht ausreichen. Die EU müsste den Prozess auch für alle anderen Länder mit Bedeutung füllen – mit einem attraktiven, erreichbaren Ziel. Und sie müsste das jetzt tun. Das kann nicht warten, bis die EU einen langsamen und schwierigen internen Reformprozess durchläuft (von dem niemand weiß, wann und wie er beendet werden wird).

Mitgliedschaft im europäischen Binnenmarkt

Daher sollten die EU und ihre Mitgliedstaaten erklären, dass jede europäische Demokratie, die die Mitgliedschaftskriterien, einschließlich der Achtung der Menschenrechte und der Rechtsstaatlichkeit, erfüllt, Zugang zum europäischen Binnenmarkt, zu den vier Freiheiten (freier Waren-, Personen-, Dienstleistungs- und Kapitalverkehr) sowie zu den EU-Fonds erhält.

Dies wäre ein ehrgeiziges Ziel, das die Länder sehr nahe an die Vollmitgliedschaft heranführen würde. Sie würden (noch) keinen Sitz am Verhandlungstisch erhalten, womit den Bedenken derjenigen Mitgliedstaaten Rechnung getragen würde, die auf dem Vorrang interner EU-Reformen bestehen. Die Mitgliedschaft im Binnenmarkt umfasst aber den größten Teil des Acquis. Die Bürger:innen und Unternehmen der Länder, die es schaffen beizutreten, würden fast die gleichen Rechte und Vorteile genießen wie die der EU-Mitgliedstaaten.

Die EU-Vollmitgliedschaft wäre weiterhin das Ziel. Mitgliedschaft im Binnenmarkt, dem auch alle EU Mitglieder beitreten müssen, wäre ein großer Schritt auf dem Weg zur Vollmitgliedschaft – ein attraktives, erreichbares Zwischenziel. Auch Österreich, Finnland und Schweden wurde in der ersten Hälfte der 1990er Jahre zuerst eine Mitgliedschaft im Binnenmarkt angeboten, weil einige Mitgliedsstaaten erweiterungsfeindlich waren. Sobald sich die politischen Bedingungen innerhalb der EU geändert hatten, konnten sie – schon gut vorbereitet – rasch auch der EU beitreten.

Dieser Ansatz bietet zwei große Vorteile: Erstens werden bilaterale Blockaden für einen großen Teil des Prozesses aus dem Weg geräumt. Es ist Aufgabe der Kommission, über die Fortschritte zu berichten. Erst wenn in allen Bereichen ein „gutes Vorbereitungsniveau" erreicht ist, gäbe es am Ende eine politische Entscheidung aller Mitgliedstaaten über die Aufnahme des jeweiligen Landes in den Binnenmarkt.

Zweitens kann dies allen europäischen Demokratien angeboten werden, unabhängig von ihrem formalen Status im Beitrittsprozess, also auch dem Kosovo und Bosnien-Herzegowina. Dies würde es ermöglichen, schon jetzt alle westlichen Balkanländer in den Transformationsprozess einzubinden. Und natürlich kann dies auch der Ukraine, Moldau und Georgien angeboten werden. Dies würde auch ihren Prozess mit Bedeutung füllen und ihnen ein attraktives, erreichbares Ziel auf dem Weg zur Vollmitgliedschaft geben.

In ihrer Rede zur Lage der Union kündigte Ursula von der Leyen an, mit der Ukraine zusammenzuarbeiten, „um einen nahtlosen Zugang zum EU-Binnenmarkt zu gewährleisten". Das ist ermutigend, erfordert nun aber konkrete Schritte. Viel steht auf dem Spiel. Nicht zuletzt, ob die Ukraine in der Zukunft auf unserer Seite stehen wird oder nicht. ◁

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Famines in Soviet Ukraine: What We Still Need to Know

BY IRYNA SKUBII

Writing about the Soviet famines in Ukraine and their legacies exposes the hierarchies and interconnections of human survival, environment, and materiality as the value of natural resources, animals, and material items grew exponentially during these extreme periods. As millions of people were dying of starvation and illnesses, so were their animals. Wild animals were caught by people en masse. *At the same time, material valuables were lost as a result of being exchanged for food and confiscated.*

Starving horse hitched to a hay wagon on the outskirts of Kharkiv. Alexander Wienerberger, 1933.

Photo: CPA Media Pte Ltd / Alamy Stock Foto

The history of the famines in the Soviet Union, not least the history of the Holodomor of 1932–1933 in Ukraine, has been extensively studied. Yet, academic and public discussions are predominantly centred around their political contexts. While heated debates are bringing new developments into our understanding of their nature, there are many potential areas of knowledge about the most recent of Ukraine's and Eastern Europe's famines still to bring to light. If geographical, demographic, and economic aspects of the Soviet famines are well-studied, the material and environmental dimensions of these extreme periods of survival remain almost omitted, as if people were living outside of any places and spaces or were disconnected from everything except the state and power relations.

When trying to understand the history of famines and each individual story of survival, it is important to know what relations people had with the material objects, spaces, and nature surrounding them. When listening to the interviews of Holodomor survivors or reading the reports of the state authorities and eyewitness accounts of the famines of 1921–1923 and 1946–1947, one notices recurring stories about the "disappearance" of cattle and horses, cats and dogs, birds, and grass from yards or streets. Similarly, the documentation of state security authorities and photographic images capture numerous human corpses and carcasses of horses along roads. Trying to make sense of these catastrophes either not immediately seen by the state or "orchestrated" by it, one is immediately plunged into these calamitous images and asks several questions. What resources did people have to survive? What knowledge about the surrounding material and environmental landscapes did they need to possess? How did human survival practices and famines overall impact the nature and spaces—non-human animals, objects, landscapes—that people were part of? How does this knowledge help us to understand the famines?

In looking for answers, the first step is to uncover the interconnections and interdependencies of humans and non-humans. This seems obvious but the ties between people, animals, objects, and spaces become closer and more intertwined in times of extremes. Although in Ukraine's history the early Soviet period, and the first half of the twentieth century more broadly, is widely considered an era of industrial and social modernization, food shortages and famines were recurrent events. The famines that occured regularly in pre-industrial times were largely caused by environmental factors and social inequalities; in the cases of Soviet Ukraine and Kazakhstan they occurred and were intensified due to deliberate state policies and (in)actions.

Being the instruments of Soviet collectivization, excessive grain and fodder requisitions left cattle and household animals without sufficient food. As millions of people starved and died, so did their animals. In addition, *dekulakization* and confiscations left peasant population without their tools of work and valuables. To survive, people tried to save their cows and to live on milk, caught street dogs, hunted wild animals, or sold and exchanged their remaining valuable items. Under these circumstances, animals did not just suffer from hunger, they continued to be physically exploited as labor force or slaughtered (looking at the fate of cattle), or caught *en masse* due to lack of conventional food in the case of wild animals.

During the years of Soviet famines, the variety of animals consumed by people expanded dramatically with less common inhabitants of wild nature becoming a source of vital food. While eating fish or boar was common among the people of the Ukrainian steppes and forest-steppe zones, other wild animals—such as groundhogs, gophers, mice, and hedgehogs—entered their diet only in times of dearth as they were forced to extend their cultural and ethical boundaries. As the years of famines coexisted with significant changes in the Soviet economy and agriculture, the impact of new agricultural technologies was colossal. One of the most consequential policies was the pest eradication campaign, which aimed to exterminate gophers from agricultural areas. As these wild animals were traditionally considered as pests, their presence in rural landscapes was not seen in a good light. These changes coincided with the years of hunger, when, together with other wild animals, gophers became one source of human survival.

The Soviet famines also uncovered the multilayered interconnections of human agency and material objects as the value of the latter grew exponentially during these extreme periods of human survival. According to the recollections of the famines' survivors, the longevity of their lives depended on various household items, such as spoons, wedding rings, earrings, and coins, that became a lifeline for significant number of starving families. Those who survived the famines felt not only trauma but also a loss for their scarce material belongings. Although communist ideology in the early Soviet period had critical views on materiality, it is crucial to consider the changing practices towards the usage of things under the extreme circumstances of famine. Rare, singular valuables were lost as starving families had to give them away in exchange for food. During the famine of 1932–1933, the TORGSYNs shops, which were initially created for foreign customers, almost legally confiscated all remaining valuable possessions that families might have preserved for decades. The stories of lost personal items became the repositories of individual famine experiences.

During a famine as a time of extreme survival, the agency of humans, animals, and material objects is intertwined. As their relations are not horizontal, the agency of animals and materiality had to submit to the purposes of human survival. Causing the death of millions of people, the Soviet state policies impacted the livelihoods of animals and human-material relations. These larger effects of famines spread out beyond the human experience. As all animals, plants, and material objects belonged to the same environment as people, they became either the nonspeaking witnesses of the extremes of human starvation, deprivation, and death, or famine victims themselves. Although Russia's ongoing war in Ukraine has different dynamics than those of Soviet famines, the environment and materiality again serve as witnesses of violence, destruction, and loss.

Seeing these interconnections and interdependencies of human and animal experiences during times of extremes, we need to think of the history of famine as an interspecies catastrophe. To get a nuanced understanding of the Soviet famines in Ukraine and the effects of state's policies for people and other members of surrounding environments, we have to remember everyone and everything that fell victim to such violences or survived despite them. ◁

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A Landmine Detonates in the Woods

BY DARYA TSYMBALYUK

Russia's war in Ukraine does not only kill thousands of people, it also profoundly changes relations between people and environments as many places have been turned dangerous and life-threatening for humans and other species.

Photo: YASUYOSHI CHIBA / AFP / picturedesk.com

Nadezhda, 62, sells fresh and preserved mushrooms at a roadside as she and her son collect them in the woods carefully not stepping on mines in Izyum, a recently recaptured town in the Kharkiv region, on October 10, 2022, amid the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

While sitting at a hairdresser's in Kyiv in early October, I overheard two women talking about mushroom picking, a popular activity among Kyivites. Yet, instead of expected stories about their finds and forest trips, they talked about two men who went searching for mushrooms and died stepping on a land mine.

Before the February escalation of Russia's war on Ukraine to a full-scale invasion, I was interested in conducting research in mushroom-picking cultures of Ukraine. Mushroom picking is an immensely popular activity in the country, where people of all ages and professions explore the woods for edible fungi. There are long genealogies of local forms of knowledge surrounding this foraging activity. I grew up in the steppes of Ukraine, without any knowledge of mushrooms or the woods passed on to me by my parents, so I was looking forward to developing this project and learning about forest environments guided by mushroom pickers from different regions. After the escalation of Russia's war on Ukraine, these research ideas are not possible to implement.

Mushroom season is in full swing at the moment, and stories like the one I overheard in Kyiv populate Ukrainian news: four mushroom pickers died in Chernihiv oblast, two people got injured in two different places in Kharkiv oblast, two people got hurt in Zaporizhzhia oblast. Thinking about these stories makes me painfully aware of the extent to which people in Ukraine have become deprived of access to different environments—forests and seas, fields and steppes—and the extent to which these environments have now become places of extreme danger. By access I do not just mean the privileged access of a tourist going on a hike. Forests and seas have long been vital for livelihoods in Ukraine, where people often depend on fishing and foraging for living. These stories also make me painfully aware of the harm done to environments and their nonhuman inhabitants all over the country. Birds' routes and nesting conditions have been disrupted. Animals die from shelling and starvation. Forests are being destroyed by fires. All forms of war violence, including land mines do not kill only human beings. Land mines, for example, can be detonated by nonhuman animals or tree roots. Because of this, they cause loss of biodiversity, and even the process of demining results in the destruction of plants and other life.

Already prior to the February escalation, Ukraine had some of the highest numbers of deaths from land mines in the world. According to estimates, before 2022, 8 percent of Ukrainian territory was mined. There are no numbers for the current situation, and it is scary to imagine the real extent of the problem. Russia uses antipersonnel land mines, which are triggered when stepped over. The 1997 Mine Ban Treaty prohibits their use but, unlike Ukraine, Russia did not sign it.

When the military fighting finally stops, the land mines will remain. They will continue killing, injuring, and contaminating for years. Ukraine's forests, steppes, and seas will continue to be places of heightened risk and potential death. Many oblasts have already prohibited the access to forests. If the war stops tomorrow, Ukraine will not be fully demined in one week or two, or not even in a year. What does this mean for people's relations with environments? What does it mean for their perception of spaces around them? What does it mean for the lives of ecosystems?

Mushroom picking and foraging play an important role in preserving local knowledge about ecosystems as well as systems of knowledge-exchange. In Ukraine, environmental knowledge about forests and foraging practices has been shared informally via familial and community networks. One usually learns about different types of fungi by going to the woods together with a person already experienced in mushroom picking. This local knowledge and understanding of ecosystems are especially important in a time of climate emergency and increasing alienation of humans from more-than-human worlds. Mushroom picking requires being attentive to weather changes, to light and humidity, and to relations between different species—for example, between aspen trees and yellow swamp *russula* mushrooms. It allows for a deeper understanding of ecosystems as well as of the different beings and elements that constitute them. For many people in Ukraine, the war took away the possibility to engage with the woods and other ecosystems through mushroom picking and other practices, therefore dramatically changing their relations to environments. The war has also displaced and fragmented families from every corner of Ukraine, disrupting networks that would allow people to pass on knowledge about forests, mushroom picking, and foraging further. While the war continues, and even after it is over, these networks and the knowledge they pass on will never be fully restored.

Ukrainian lore links the seeming abundance of mushrooms in the woods this year with the escalation of the war—according to a myth, an abundance of mushrooms is an ominous sign of a war. "When there are many mushrooms, people will be dying." (*Коли гриби вродять, тоді на людей помір бувае*); "Many mushrooms—many coffins" (*Багато грибів, багато гробів*); "Mushrooms bring coffins" (*Гриби—на гроби*)—these are just some sayings that associate mushrooms with the war. Some resources point out that this myth originated after the unusual abundance of mushrooms before the outbreak of the Second World War. I cannot confirm or deny the extraordinary plenitude of mushrooms in Ukraine this year. Yet, when imagining this possible abundance, I cannot stop thinking about mushroom pickers who are not there to forage, whether because going to a forest is prohibited or because they have been killed, injured, displaced, or gone to fight.

Mushrooms often carry an association with death even during the times of peace—they pose the danger of lethal poisoning. These days the forests they grow in carry even more deaths within them, and not only in the form of land mines. I will never be able to unsee images of the forest near Izyum where mass graves were discovered after Ukrainian forces de-occupied the city. One of the sites had more than 440 bodies of people killed by the Russian military.

There is a myriad of deaths in the Ukrainian woods these days. There is a dying of more-than-human worlds, of biotopes, of relations that form them, and of inhabitants that populate ecosystems. Many of these deaths hardly make the news. Most are not registered, and cannot be registered as we cannot access the places and as more-than-human deaths are not counted. Many deaths are yet to come even after the end of the war, when another land mine detonates somewhere deep in the woods, or when metals and toxins from weapons poison the water. These deaths also mean that relations and understandings of environments in Ukraine are changing, that the spaces we have known are not the same. They are never the same, of course, especially with the climate emergency and the sixth mass extinction—these spaces only exist in perpetual reassembling of relations. Yet, the war exacerbates the rupture of relations, cutting right through more-than-human worlds. Having survived the world's biggest nuclear disaster at Chornobyl in 1986, Ukraine knows how to "get on with the art of living," as Kate Brown reminds us in *Manual for Survival.* Yet, we shall never forget against what terror this living takes place, when—extending Adolfo Albán Achinte's notion of re-existence to include more-than-human communities—we can only see life in resistance to ongoing violence and erasure.

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I spent only ten days in Kyiv this autumn. When people ask me what I thought of everyday life in the capital of a country under attack, I struggle to find a good answer, but perhaps the conversation between two women I overheard at a hairdresser's is a good story to share. Their chat about mushroom picking could be an insignificant detail of an ordinary Wednesday afternoon—life does go on in Kyiv. Yet the land mine detonates and makes the conversation explode in violent pieces when you least expect it. Stories of (the impossibility of) mushroom picking poignantly remind me of the extent to which Ukrainian realities have been invaded and destroyed, where the most mundane things have been devastated and crushed. These days everything is steeped in violence and death, even ordinary conversations. ◁

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Ancient Help for Modern Problems: The Case of Aristotle

BY CARLOS FRAENKEL

At a time when we are scrambling to figure out the right way to live, engulfed by cascading crises, ancient philosophers offer us formidable tools to rethink what we want our personal and collective lives to look like. This essay asks how Aristotle's idea of the best life—paradoxically a life devoted to "useless" work—helps us to address the prospect of an artificial intelligence revolution and the challenge of sustainability.

Photo: akg-images / Schütze / Rodemann

Gustav Adolph Spangenberg, *Philosophy: The School of Aristotle* (fresco, 1883/88), from the cycle *The Four Faculties,* Halle (Saxony-Anhalt), main building of the university, staircase.

Can we learn something from ancient philosophy? Yes, a great deal, especially in times of crisis. If we boarded a time machine to take a tour of ancient Athens, all the philosophers we would meet there would try to lure us into their schools by advertising their philosophy as *the* gateway to *eudaimonia:* a happy and flourishing life. "Sign me up!" you will exclaim. Who does not want to be happy and to flourish? But once the old bearded men in tunics start lecturing, we are in for a shock. They turn everything we believe about happiness and flourishing on its head. Good looks, cool friends, romance, sizzling sex, Instagram-ready children, wealth, status, fame, an Ivy league degree, a stellar career? None of this matters, they contend.

From Socrates to the Skeptics the ancients shake us out of our complacency with an avalanche of uncomfortable questions: about our upbringing; our career ambitions; our views on morality and politics; our ideas of friendship, love, and family; our role in society. Yet they cannot do their job unless we first dig them out from under a heap of misrepresentations. They catch dust as pillars of Western civilization, are peddled as self-help gurus, or are canceled as "dead white dudes" responsible for racism, colonialism, sexism, and Western civilization's other sins. That is a travesty, however. They are really Western civilization's sharpest critics from within!

What is the point of confronting these uncomfortable questions? Since the Soviet Bloc crumbled, more people than ever are free to live as they please. We can kneel in church, but also dance the night away or stand on our head in yoga class. We can celebrate Hanukkah, Christmas, or Gay pride. But even in a perfect liberal world in which we have freedom, a fair share of resources, and equal opportunities, we still need to learn how to convert these assets into good lives. What liberal societies fail to give us is tools to deliberate and make good use of all that choice.

Why is that a problem? The last few years have thrown us into ever-growing confusion: extreme weather, populist upheaval, billionaires buzzing through space while capsized migrant dinghies wash up on shores, war in Europe, and much more. In liberal societies—communities of equals—we cannot point fingers at kings, popes, or tyrants for the way things go. We are the sovereign. When the world comes apart, we are jointly to blame.

The ancients can help us fix the mess. For centuries they wrestled with Socrates' question: How should we live? They meticulously thought through every detail of life: what to eat, how to manage our desires, how to face loss and sorrow, which policies to endorse, where we fit into the universe. Taken together their contributions form history's most vigorous discussion yet about what defines the good life.

In what follows I examine one particular definition of the good life—that of Aristotle—and ask how it can help us contend with two key problems of our time: the prospect of an artificial intelligence (AI) revolution and the challenge of sustainability.

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As parents it is hard not to feel dread these days: are we preparing our children for a future that will not exist? I recently watched a documentary with my thirteen-year-old daughter about the jobs, from truck drivers to radiologists, that apostles of the AI revolution predict will soon disappear. "I hope," she said, matter-of-factly, "that judges won't be replaced in my life-time" (currently her favorite career). "Or else novelists" (number two on her list). Meanwhile the climate apocalypse she and her classmates conjure up on colorful banners, when they skip school to join Fridays for Future demonstrations, edges closer and closer. One day, friends from Vancouver report about life under a "heat dome." Another day, my brother in Germany grimly jokes about putting his daughters, aged five and one, to sleep in floaties after floods engulfed entire towns near where he lives. How long, I wonder, until we will watch our own car float down the street or come home to a house in flames.

Can Aristotle help? The best life, he argues, is one of leisure. It also has a moderate ecological footprint. Aristotelians would welcome AI and robots to the extent they free us from menial work. And the lifestyle they champion does not require unsustainable economic growth. Yet making a case for Aristotle's life of leisure turns out to be surprisingly hard.

Consider the thought-experiment Aristotle proposes in his *Exhortation to Philosophy:* one day you are transported to the Isles of the Blessed, a place where all your material needs—hunger, shelter, healthcare, etc.—are provided for, so you do not have to worry about a thing. Is the freedom you would enjoy there a blessing or a curse? What would you do all day long? Hang out idly on the beach? Drink and party? Is not a life without purpose a nightmare even if it comes with material comfort?

As the debate about an unconditional basic income (UBI) goes mainstream, Aristotle's question becomes an existential one for all of us. What happens if work runs out and the state puts money into our pocket with no strings attached? Andrew Yang, the hapless candidate for the Democratic party's nomination in the 2020 US presidential election and for New York mayor in 2021, made UBI his signature policy proposal. Robots and AI are coming for our jobs, he argued in his 2018 book, *The War on Normal People.*

The Great Displacement will lead to fear, misery, and social unrest, which, in turn, will give rise to autocrats. Donald Trump was just a first glimpse into that dystopian future. But UBI, Yang believes, can still nip it in the bud.

Yang's argument is based on fear. He wants UBI to save us from upheaval. Others, like Sam Altman, the CEO of OpenAI, see the formula of AI plus UBI as a springboard to utopia. But even in the best-case scenario, in which a combination of technological innovation and humane social policies gets us a life along the lines of Aristotle's Isles of the Blessed, the question of what we would do there remains.

For Aristotle leisure is a blessing. It does not doom us to a meaningless life but sets us free to do what really matters: read books, produce art, discuss politics, study science and philosophy. The less we must toil to earn a living, the more time we have to develop our creative, moral, and intellectual capabilities. The Isles of the Blessed, where we can enjoy this kind of life, is Aristotle's idea of paradise. Is this an attractive vision? Many are reluctant to sign on.

To start with, take the Protestant work ethic. It considers hard-earned wealth proof of God's grace. The self-satisfaction you see radiating from Rembrandt's portraits of seventeenth century Calvinist merchants does not just come from the riches they have amassed, but also from their confidence that they are going to heaven. Connecting prosperity to salvation in this way, as the sociologist Max Weber noted, provides a powerful incentive to work. For Weber it gave rise to capitalism. On this view spending time on pursuits that do not increase wealth is not the gate to paradise—it paves the way to hell.

But UBI also conflicts with something more fundamental in a free-market society: its fundamental principle of distributive justice. The basic idea is this: what we do with our lives is up to us—how much we learn, how hard we work, whether we make apple pie or software programs, teach math in school or perform brain surgery, sit behind the supermarket checkout or head a multinational corporation. But when it comes to rewards—money and status—we get what we deserve: proportional to the value of our contribution. Critics of meritocracy focus on the many ways in which access to opportunities is not really equal (the millionaire's child has much better chances to advance than the janitor's). Or they ask if it is fair to reward certain types of work more than others. But it is the logic of meritocracy itself that turns compensation without contribution into a contradiction in terms.

The anthropologist James Suzman argues in his 2020 book, *Work: A Deep History from the Stone Age to the Age of Robots,* that our fixation on productivity has even deeper cultural roots. It goes all the way back to the Neolithic revolution, 12,000 years ago, when agriculture replaced hunting and gathering. Hunter-gatherers, according to Suzman, trusted that nature provides abundantly for them. Wild animals and plants easily satisfied their needs. And thanks to a social ethic that discouraged competing and hoarding, they could rely on solidarity as well. To sustain their lifestyle they only had to work about fifteen hours per week. The rest of the time they enjoyed leisure. Farmers, by contrast, always worry that floods, droughts, or insects will wipe out the few crops they depend on. This puts pressure on them to stock up on food in case of a famine. As the farmer's fear of scarcity supplants the forager's trust in nature, the modern drive to work takes shape. This drive became so deeply ingrained, Suzman argues, that we still feel compelled to be productive even though scarcity in our time has long ceased to be a threat. Rather than enjoying leisure like our hunter-gatherer forebears, we make up artificial needs whose satisfaction keeps us busy. These artificial needs, in turn, fuel unsustainable economic growth. To break the vicious circle, Suzman concludes, we must rehabilitate leisure.

There is a silver lining in all these explanations: if our approach to work is grounded in culture, it is not written in stone. Cultural attitudes can change. But the desire to work also seems to have deeper roots in our nature. Many of us go to work for less shallow reasons than money or fear of starving: our jobs are tied so deeply to our identity and sense of purpose that a life in which we are no longer needed as nurses, educators, engineers, judges, carpenters, or pilots looks horribly empty. As G.W.F. Hegel and Karl Marx noted, when we bake bread, build houses or heal patients we are not just satisfying needs, but also developing our natural abilities. Without work we cannot realize ourselves.

Aristotle, of course, values these kinds of labor. After all, we live in the real world, not on the Isles of the Blessed. We cannot focus on poetry or philosophy if we are freezing, hungry, sick, fearful of burglars or of a tyrant's henchmen. To satisfy our needs we need masons, farmers, doctors, policemen, lawmakers, and so on. But Aristotle also argues that our highest capabilities are those we exercise when we pursue the life of the mind. The more time we dedicate to it, the better. No longer having to bring in the harvest, build houses, see patients, fly airplanes, and so on liberates us to do things that, for Aristotle, are even more worthwhile. The choice for him is not between working and being idle, but between different kinds of work—*ergon* in Greek. The activities that make up the life of the mind are the noblest form of *ergon.* Aristotle concedes that this *ergon* is "useless" if judged by its practical benefits (unlike the *ergon* of farmers, engineers, nurses, or pilots). Yet it is indispensable for living up to our full potential. A life in which we do not develop our creative, moral, and intellectual capabilities is crippled for Aristotle. It wastes the finest things nature has given us. Far from pushing us into a life without purpose, leisure thus enables us to flourish by realizing the *telos* (end) of our nature.

Yes, in its Aristotelian form that ideal is outrageously elitist, confined to Greek men. To find time to read, study, and discuss, Aristotle argues, Greek men need slaves to do the menial work (cleaning, cooking etc.) and a wife to take care of the household. The arguments he offers in this regard are among his most appalling, both racist and sexist. They include the division of humankind into Greeks and Barbarians, the case for "natural" slavery, and the claim that women are intellectually inferior to men.

The good news is that we do not need to "cancel" Aristotle. We can just throw out that unsavory framework and democratize his ideal. If the key commodity is leisure, UBI would allow everyone to cultivate the mind without the need for slaves or housewives. Already in 1930 the economist John Maynard Keynes claimed that his grandchildren would not need to work more than fifteen hours per week. The extraordinary increase of productivity in the modern age, Keynes argued, would gradually liberate us from wage labor. He likewise observed how technological innovation steadily cut down the load of menial tasks. Thanks to automation and washing machines, then, we could all inhabit the Isles of the Blessed! Why did Keynes' prediction not come true? The actual productivity gains since 1930, James Suzman stresses, in fact exceed Keynes's expectations. It is the work compulsion Suzman traces back to the Stone Age, and the artificial needs it generates today, that prevent us from taking a break.

There is a parallel to UBI on the left where theorists like Aaron Bastani try to revive Marx's utopian vision of a post-work society. In 2019, Bastani published a manifesto for what he calls Fully Automated Luxury Communism. While advocates of UBI want to tax corporations to generate the required revenue, Bastani wants to expropriate them and divide up profits equitably among the citizens. But the less and the more radical version converge on making leisure available to all.

Putting money into people's pockets of course is not enough. We would also need to turn education and culture into public goods—schools, colleges, libraries, museums, theatres—so we can make productive use of our free time to realize what Aristotle takes to be the human *telos.* The question, however, is no longer whether this is feasible, but whether we can muster the political will to do it.

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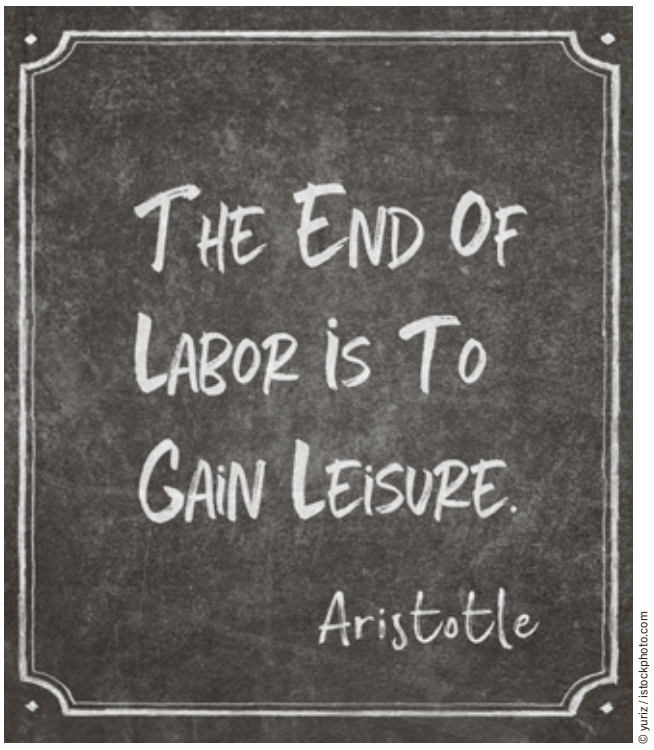
But is not it frivolous to pursue the life of the mind given the many pressing problems—climate change, poverty, racism, war—we should be taking on? Many feel that fighting for righteous causes is the nobler choice. Yet when we are trying to eradicate these problems, are we not aiming at a sustainable, just, and peaceful society with ample leisure? Arguably, then, we are aiming to create the conditions for a life in which we could, without feeling guilty, cultivate the mind. We might not prioritize it in the present, but we would still choose to fight now, so we can write poetry and discuss philosophy later.



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And is the life of the mind as "useless" as Aristotle makes it appear? Or could it be part of the solution? Its greatest *economic* advantage is that it is never in short supply. Unlike the scarce resources we fight over—wealth, power, fame—it is a non-scarce good that in principle can be enjoyed by everyone. It does not matter whether ten or ten billion people grasp that two plus two is four: when it comes to the insights of science and philosophy, we never need to scrimp. The same is true for novels, art, and music. No matter how many people read *Anna Karenina* or see the Mona Lisa, they will not deplete them.

In a society centered on the life of the mind, as Aristotle envisages it, citizens would be most passionate about a non-scarce good. At the same time, Aristotle notes, they would only desire a "moderate" amount of material goods—not because they would be forced to be frugal or because they would want to share from the goodness of their heart. They would be moderate for purely egoistic reasons: why waste time on earning money beyond of what we need to sustain our cultural and intellectual interests? Given the choice, Aristotelians prefer to spend time on poetry and philosophy, not on working to be able to afford more expensive cars or bigger houses.

Such a society, then, would not destroy nature for the sake of conspicuous consumption. It also would not initiate wars over economic resources or be plagued by huge economic divides. Are these not pretty robust social benefits? The elegance of Aristotle's solution lies in that it does not preach renunciation. It is not about limiting our desires but about redirecting them towards goods that, at least by Aristotle's standard, are more valuable anyway. We are better off realizing our creative, moral, and intellectual capabilities than working for stuff that does not satisfy genuine needs.

There is a catch, though. Aristotle was not drawn to the life of the mind just because it is key to living up to our full potential, but also because it connects us to the divine. The more we cultivate our mind, the more we become like the Divine Mind—the god of the philosophers, a pure intelligence that supposedly is the source of the universe's rational order. That is Aristotle's standard to measure the quality of life: the more godlike, the better. Even if we agree with Aristotle that the life of the mind realizes capabilities grounded in our nature, that is not a sufficient reason to prioritize it. Someone might still say that, rather than writing poetry or discussing philosophy, he prefers to have lots of sex, boss people around, delight in his neighbor's envy by showing off his brand-new Porsche, relax in a luxury beach resort, and so on. He may well acknowledge his ability to learn math and physics, but show no interest in developing it. Aristotle thought he could prove his point by appealing to an objective standard of excellence: God. But unless we are prepared to argue that some form of divine intelligence governs the universe (which I am not!), this argument for the life of the mind is in trouble.

Can we come up with alternative arguments? We all know from experience the pleasure of "useless" activities—listening to music, reading novels, discussing politics and philosophy, understanding the natural and social worlds we live in. Can we do more than appeal to pleasure to explain their value? Recognizing the cultural grounds of the unsustainable productivity paradigm is one important step towards rehabilitating leisure. This does not mean that we need to look down on workaholics. We only need to expand the concept of work to include—and ideally give pride of place to—the kind of *ergon* Aristotle calls "useless." Getting excited about "useless" work will not just protect us from despair if more and more "useful" work is taken over by machines. It is also a question of survival as economic growth moves us closer to self-destruction. Whether we find the prospect of a sustainable society with less traditional work appealing arguably hinges on our willingness to embrace "useless" work. Aristotle makes a powerful, though not conclusive, case for that. ◁

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God's Abdication as the Principle of a New Western Political Theology

BY RAFAEL ZAWISZA

Even though the war against Ukraine has mobilized the West to counter Russia's aggression, the Western countries are not guided by a long-lasting, consistent vision of themselves. In the long run, however, such a vision could prevail. That is why this article adumbrates a political theology that could fill the vacuum of indecisiveness.

Tsimtsum is the idea of God's "contraction," invented by Isaac Luria (1534–1572), a Jewish kabbalist from Safed in Galilee. Although Luria was active as a charismatic teacher for only two years and left almost no written legacy, his reinvention of the Kabbalah survived through the handwritten copies of his followers, which circulated from Palestine to Italy, Germany, and the Netherlands, and reached Poland and Ukraine, where Chassidism was born out of the Lurianic spirit.[1]

Before Gershom Scholem rediscovered and explicated Lurianism's philosophical meaning to a wider audience in the 1930s, the idea of tsimtsum had wandered through the Jewish world and become the impulse for Sabbatianism, a messianic movement in the 17th century that almost turned Jewish traditional life upside down. Later, Sabbatian heterodox ideas found refuge in Polish Frankism, another forgotten movement that has been recently reintroduced by Olga Tokarczuk in *The Books of Jacob* (2014).[2] Also, not many people are aware that Lurianic visionary thinking largely inspired the German Idealism of Hegel and Schelling, thus entering the center of European philosophy.[3] Hence, recalling Luria's theology today is meant to reform the center, with the aim of strengthening it by inventing a suitable political theology for the Western world, which, as it stands, lacks consistency when confronted with Russia's aggression against Ukraine. Here political theology is not about religious belief or dogma, but rather seeks to provide model, inspiration, and guiding *principle*.

Lurianic Kabbalah has multiple versions, yet one can discern its fundamental idea: namely that God, in order to create the world, had to limit their power and either disappeared or at least made an "empty space," otherwise the Creation never would have occurred or humans would have been created as marionettes. If Ludwig Feuerbach is right and visions of God are projections of our own existence, then late modernity in the West could find the most obvious symbol of its own fatigue and anxiety in a God who vanishes. We find this God not only in the Lurianic Kabbalah but also in modern philosophy. Each theogony has its distinct *orientation* however. In Philipp Mainländer's *Die Philosophie der Erlösung* (1876), the author imagined a God who could be a patron the era of entropy. The scientific hypothesis about entropy claims that the ultimate point of the cosmic odyssey is the exhaustion of energy down to the zero level. According to Mainländer, God initiated a great move of undoing reality, which seems to be nothing but divinity's prolonged suicide, in which all the suffering creatures participate. Although the idea of expending less energy sounds congruent with today's proposals of degrowth, Mainländer's groundless pessimism makes him more a prophet of doom than a visionary reformer. The troubling question is how to motivate ourselves to work on improving human living conditions if one believes that God's (and the world's) ideal destination point is a dissolution into nothingness. Can we live without a secular "faith in the world,"[4] a wish and hope that the world will survive our own death?

Photo: NASA / STScI / webbtelescope.org

The Pillars of Creation in the Eagle Nebula.

Another reading of the self-limited God was provided by Ivan Ilyin (1883–1954), a Russian philosopher who is most cherished in the Kremlin today for his nationalistic philosophy that helps reunite Russia's imperial past with its Soviet era and fascism. In his interpretation of Hegel—the philosopher who saw world history as the conceptual fulfilment of Absolute Spirit—Ilyin, in contrast, came to the morose conclusion that God failed, because, out of his excessive love, he created humans endowed with too much freedom. This, in turn, made any reconciliation of the human and the divine impossible because of human capricious unpredictability. Instead of fulfillment, God left chaos. Human excessive nature reflects God's own "original sin."[5] Ilyin's antidote to that deficiency was dictatorship as the only way to correct God's mistake. Since human freedom interrupts the realization of the ideal, totalitarian rule could help by steering sinful creatures in the right direction and establishing a permanent order. For Ilyin, Russia was called to establish such an order and save the world. Such political messianism was built on an abysmal pessimism not that different from Mainländer's. For Ilyin the world seen ontologically is "God's failure," an "infinitely continued cosmogony" that brings "chaos and endless suffering."[6]

I claim that the kabbalistic vision of Creation—tsimtsum—especially in its modern reappropriation by Gershom Scholem, Hans Jonas, and Hannah Arendt, is able to refute Mainländer's and Ilyin's logic and to compete with their pessimistic narratives, thus giving the exhausted West a new spirit. In short, the tsimtsum stories acknowledge that God is absent in the world or at least nonoperative in the domain left for humans. Yet, contrary to Mainländer, Jonas sees God's gesture not as a suicide but as a divine abdication, a generous act of letting beings be. Tsimtsum is like an encouraging wink from the divine parents, who believe that their adult progeny can survive without external assistance (providence, miracles, last judgment). What is more, this kind of theogony clearly resituates human freedom as something *wanted by God.* This psychotheological moment instructs humans not to have nostalgia for some kind of lost, mythical fullness. It was God's deliberate choice and risk to leave Creation in the hands of the creatures. Otherwise, they could not be free. It is from this angle that one can ask of thinkers like Ilyin why they contradict God's will? Who are they that they would usurp the power to limit human freedom by force, whereas God abdicated from such an absolute position?

In the end, the limitation of human freedom is necessary. Nevertheless, the crucial disagreement here with the political right (not to mention religious fundamentalists) about this concentrates on how it can be achieved. Lurianic political myth is a sort of *persuasion,* a strong image that defines ethics as making a space for the others. However, Lurianic theological imagination respects the limitations of the human condition, its fragility. *Imitatio Dei* is also limited; that is why nobody is encouraged to annihilate oneself in order to make space for others.

Analyzed philosophically, tsimtsum—God's withdrawal—means that the ban on absoluteness is the condition sine qua non of plurality and life on earth. Hence, freedom should not be mistaken for total sovereignty. Tsimtsumic cosmology is a *theology of the world,* in contrast to the theologies of the absolute. Beyond the question of worldview and faith, Jonas wrote that "we must regard ourselves and all life around us as a cosmic rarity, a stroke of luck that caused a *potentiality,* hidden in matter's womb."[7] Tsimtsum is the story about the divine sparks—freedom or spontaneity—that must be collected and protected to be cherished. This moment dialectically links cosmological scale and individual liberties. It is exactly this link that could be sacrificed as first in the shadow of ecological apocalypse, because the urgent task of the salvation of the planet will make individuals less and less significant. Here a political reading of Lurianic legacy shows itself as a necessary counterpoint: it could give the West a strategic vision of how to abdicate from absolute hegemony and legitimize human self-limitation without sacrificing non-sovereign freedom. ◁

1) Gerold Necker, *Einführung in die lurianische Kabbala,* Frankfurt am Main/Leipzig 2008.
2) See Paweł Maciejko, *The Mixed Multitude: Jacob Frank and the Frankist Movement, 1755–1816,* Philadelphia 2011.
3) Christoph Schulte, Zimzum: *Gott und Weltursprung,* Berlin 2014. See also Agata Bielik-Robson, Daniel H. Weiss (eds.), *Tsimtsum and Modernity: Lurianic Heritage in Modern Philosophy and Theology,* Boston 2020.
4) See Rafael Zawisza, Ludger Hagedorn (eds.), *"Faith in the World": Post-Secular Readings of Hannah Arendt,* Campus Verlag, Frankfurt am Main/New York 2021.
5) On the political dimension of Ilyin's theogony and his role in contemporary Russia, see Timothy Synder, *The Road to Unfreedom: Russia, Europe, America,* New York 2018, chapter 1.
6) Iwan Iljin, *Die Philosophie Hegels als kontemplative Gotteslehre,* Bern 1946, pp. 361, 375, 415.
7) Hans Jonas, *Prologue,* transl. Hunter and Hildegarde Hannum, in: Hans Jonas, *Mortality and Morality: A Search for the Good after Auschwitz,* Evanston 1996, p. 51.

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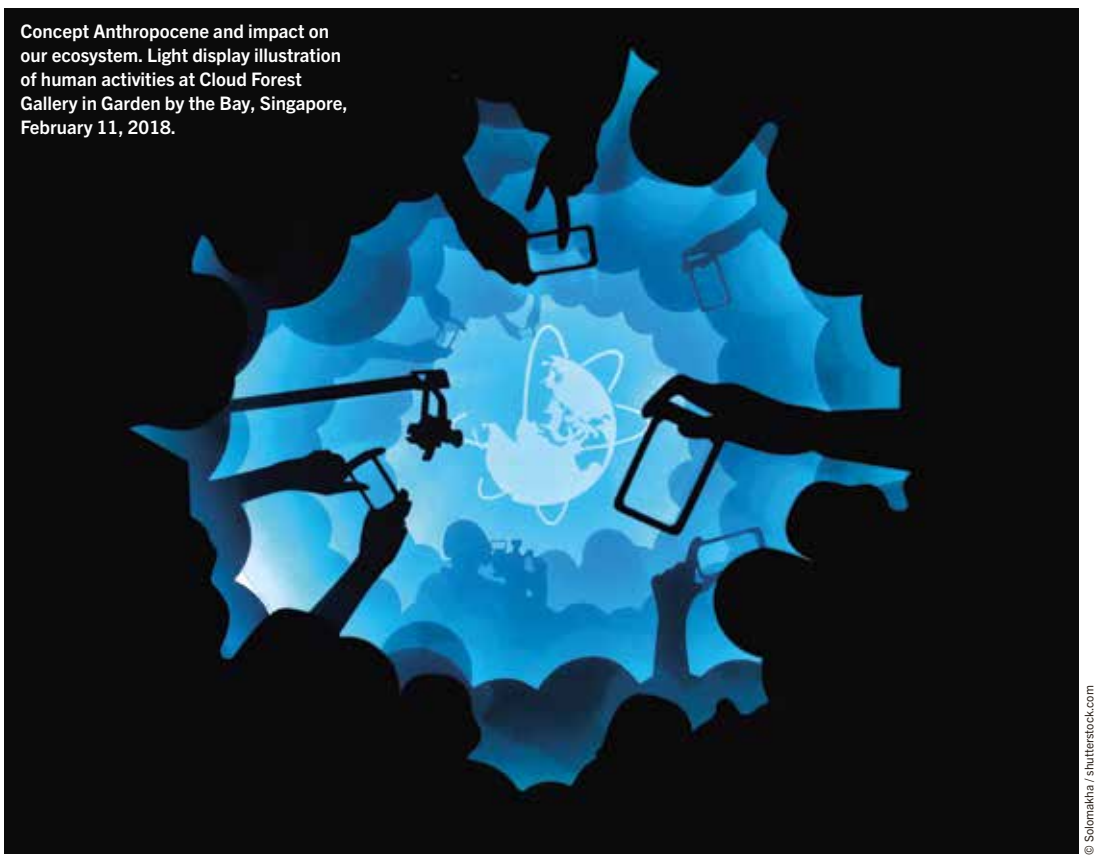
Two Histories for Two Existential Crises?

BY ANER BARZILAY

It is sixty years since nuclear disaster was narrowly averted during the Cuban Missile Crisis of October 1962. The unwelcome return of the nuclear threat surrounding the war in Ukraine joins another existential threat to humanity—the climate crisis. This invites us to reflect on what has changed in the political and historical understanding of humanity between the 1962 crisis and now.



Concept Anthropocene and impact on our ecosystem. Light display illustration of human activities at Cloud Forest Gallery in Garden by the Bay, Singapore, February 11, 2018.

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Nikita Khrushchev's gambit of placing Soviet intermediate-range ballistic missiles on Cuban soil almost brought the Cold War to a boiling point. But the historical heritage of that event is now often seen as a positive one: nuclear disaster *was* ultimately averted. As an example of diplomatic tightrope walking and game theory scenario predictions, the 1962 crisis now stands for strategic, rational decision-making in the face of catastrophe. There was also a much more prosaic logic at play: in the wake of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the disastrous stakes of nuclear war were patently clear to all. But as the United States and the Soviet Union had ideological moral claims pertaining to the whole of humankind, responsibility for nuclear holocaust was equally unimaginable to both sides.

The recent military setbacks suffered by the Russian army in Ukraine, coupled with growing domestic pressure on Vladimir Putin, have raised concerns that the Russian president might use tactical nuclear weapons to decide the war. According to US President Joe Biden, the risk of nuclear "Armageddon" is now officially at its highest level since the 1962 crisis. That we are once again contemplating the danger of a nuclear conflict does not mean, however, that we are unwittingly repeating history. This recent nuclear threat joins another existential crisis we face today—the climate crisis—whose calamitous effects become clearer to us all with every passing year, though the devastation it entails will be more gradual and geographically uneven. Furthermore, soaring energy prices after the Russia's invasion of Ukraine reveal just how much these two registers are connected. But whereas there is universal consensus on the need to avoid nuclear war at all costs, the same does not hold for the climate crisis. The reason for this seems to lie in the way in which, since the early seventies, the idea of universal humanity and its relationship to history has been fundamentally challenged by two factors: the rise of planetary thinking and identity politics.

Over the past fifty years, our understanding of human history has been entirely transformed with the ascent of planetary and ecological thinking. What was once termed "modernity" is now increasingly viewed through the prism of natural history, as a distinct geological epoch—the Anthropocene. The rise of postmodernist thought, the impact of decolonization, and the ubiquity of critical theories of race and gender have been invaluable in framing progressive political discourse of the left since the late sixties. Yet the rise of identity politics has also contributed to the decline of a universalist left and its sweeping view of history.

This universal sense of a collective "we" has been in steady decline for the past fifty years. The collapse of communism did not signal the end of history, as Francis Fukuyama famously suggested, but it did usher in our current era as one increasingly marked by the end of historicity, insofar that history is hardly used to make sense of the present. One of the defining ideas of modernity was that our relation to the past holds the key to unlocking our future. But, as the utopian promises of both sides in the Cold War waned, so did the purchase of a humanist, universal history. Instead of a single triumphant liberal universalist ideology setting the tone, we now find ourselves in a highly globalized world that is also politically fragmented. Paradoxically, however, the notion of an all embracing "humanity" is being contested just when collective action is needed the most in the face of climate disaster. Universalist claims to human agency are now often met with scorn—for good reason given the historical oppression that was carried out in the name of Western universalism. And yet the climate crisis shows that human agency matters a great deal. After all, the Anthropocene is a geological age that coincides with historical modernity, and it was caused by an unprecedented planetary agent—humankind. While it is tempting to opt for the prevalent ahistorical, normatively neutral species-thinking of natural science, the truth is that it falls short when it comes down to conceiving collective political action on a global scale.

Two recent books about the climate crisis point to the limitations of science in solving political problems. In *An Inconvenient Apocalypse,* the renowned agronomist Wes Jackson and the journalist Robert Jensen join forces as they seek to bridge the gap between science and politics.[1] They aim to recuperate the universal "we" of humanity, which has all but disappeared from contemporary academic and political discourse, as the first step to counter the climate disaster. Based on their—somewhat reductive—view of human history as a quest for "energy-rich carbon," they argue that the planet simply cannot sustain the current population growth and economic growth. From this they conclude that active "population reduction" is inevitable, which is a political issue *par excellence* and one above which the threat of coercive genocide looms large—a fate they say can be avoided with progressive universalist politics.

Their view is somewhat problematized by the environmental scientist Saleem Ali, whose recent book *Earthly Order* is an explicit attempt at making climate science more accessible to the average reader so as to affect political change, which at the same time points to structural limitations that preclude Jackson and Jensen's species notion of "we".[2] Ali is unwavering about the need for growing reliance on nuclear energy while suggesting that autocratic regimes like the one in China are more effective in countering the climate crisis due to their capacity for long-term planning and lower dependency on short-term election cycles that hamper effective climate policy in democracies.

Jackson and Jensen conflate human and natural history when they reduce human history to a quest for carbon. This limited view of history cannot explain why we ought to choose a democratic form of deliberation. Likewise, though their entire argument relies on the fruits of modern science, the shared origin of the universal validity of science and the form of politics they advocate remains tacit. The Agricultural Revolution cannot explain the emergence of the Scientific and Industrial Revolutions in the West nor the rise of democracy in ancient Greece. These are intrinsically historical questions. This issue resurfaces in relation to Ali's provocative point about the comparative advantage of autocracies in implementing sustainable climate policies. There is no doubt that the future of humanity on this planet will be largely decided by China, which—with its declared goal to achieve carbon neutrality by 2060—has done in recent years more to counter the climate crisis than any country, and with great efficacy. But one wonders if this is really because of the country's autocratic political system, or perhaps because it has arguably the last regime in the world that still takes its national *historical* past very seriously as it seeks to shape and realize the national future. However, the operative word here is "national." The Chinese regime's vision is not one of universal humankind despite its repeated reference in recent years to humanity as a "Community of Common Destiny." This term seems to have more to do with China's hegemonic aspirations in the global order rather than its commitment to universalism—as evidenced by China's growing enclosure and withdrawal from the international order since Covid-19.

Lacking a clear political vision for the future is exactly what both books warn us about, and yet both fail to recognize that the solution to this impasse must entail a combination of natural history and human history for the marriage of natural science and politics to succeed.

The war in Ukraine has brought the history of the twentieth century back to the fore as it has forced the international community to come together and act responsibly to prevent the conflict from escalating into a nuclear one. Let it serve as a reminder of what in 1962 was taken for granted: that the fate of humanity transcends ideological differences. And in the face of destruction of our own doing, our fate still lies in our hands. ◁

1) Jackson, W. and Jensen, R. *An Inconvenient Apocalypse: Environmental Collapse, Climate Crisis, and the Fate of Humanity,* University of Notre Dame Press, 2022.
2) Ali, Saleem H. *Earthly Order: How Natural Laws Define Human Life,* Oxford University Press, 2022.

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Climate Hazards and Displacement in India

BY SHATABDI DAS

Climate hazards have distressful consequences in India, not least in terms of displacements. People living in and around fragile ecosystems, which are also often conflict-ridden, are affected disproportionately by climate hazards, depending on their location and accessibility as well on management systems for rescue and relief. Displaced persons forced to migrate out of a climate disaster hotspot are further marginalized due to the lack of resources for them to adapt to hostile environments.

Photo: Altaf Qadri / AP / picturedesk.com

A woman prays by an overpass where she has taken shelter after evacuating the flooded banks of the river Yamuna in New Delhi, October 1, 2022.

The number of climate-induced hazards has been increasing in India, with more than a 100 million inhabitants impacted by natural events like droughts and floods, leaving the country with the highest number of displacements due to such hazards among South Asian countries. Cyclones and storms have triggered most of the new displacements related to climate hazards, with the largest proportion of people affected living in urban and peri-urban areas.

Climate anomalies across different parts of the country are evident through a number of calamities: while a coastal city like Chennai struggled due to water scarcity in 2019, states located in the northern riverine plains such as Assam and Bihar saw high water levels cause floods. Annually recurring floods increase the socioeconomic vulnerabilities of inhabitants in the Brahmaputra valley of Assam and in the Kosi River basin in Bihar.

Fluctuations in monsoon rainfall have resulted in longer dry spells and heavy rains over a shorter time, causing waterlogging, submergence of land, and floods. In 2022, rainfall in India was 9 percent above average as a result of the interplay of dry and wet spells. The National Disaster Management Authority reports that more than 1 million people have been affected in Bihar due to the Kosi River flood and in the parts of Assam inundated by the Brahmaputra River and the breach of untended barrages and embankments, all induced by heavy rain in May and June 2022. The stagnation of water, the overflow of sewers, the contamination of drinking water sources, and the dearth of essential goods, clean water, and medical facilities increase the risk of outbreaks of vector-borne diseases like malaria and dengue, as well as typhoid and cholera in the post-hazard and recovery phases.

Failures to adapt, respond, and recover from environmental changes drive migration. Stress factors such as droughts, hailstorms, and floods have driven people from rural areas of the states of Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh to cities like Delhi and Mumbai and the industrial region of eastern India in search of livelihood options. In 2019, there were reports of around 100,000 migrant workers being displaced due to prolonged droughts in parts of Gujarat, Maharashtra, and Tamil Nadu. Extensive areas of seven districts of the state of West Bengal were inundated due to heavy rain and the subsequent discharge of water from dams in August and September 2021, causing hundreds of thousands of people to be displaced to thousands of emergency relief camps.

Water scarcity, crop failure, the rising sea level, and the intrusion of salt water into paddy fields in deltaic and coastal zones add to the number of climate migrants in India. Loss of land and salinization of soil are among the impacts of sea-level rise. Narratives of loss of land and means of livelihood have been emerging over a period of fifty to sixty years—especially of homes razed to ground and cattle lost after cyclones. The cyclones Amphan (May 2020) and Yaas (May 2021) as well the impacts of heavy monsoon rain have forced people to shift habitat in the Ganga delta, moving from one island to the other in search of opportunities to earn a living and build homes from scraps.

Migration in India is still largely dependent on the seasonal nature of agriculture, and since livestock rearing and fishing are affected by extreme climatic events like drought and storms respectively, the cyclical migration from rural areas to urban areas and back is affected by erratic and low rainfall, water scarcity during droughts, or floods. Such conditions push migrants to move for longer periods to urban areas for assured livelihood opportunities and they can be a deterrent to migrants returning to their hometowns. One of the outcomes of this distress migration is that workers settle in one-room dwellings in squatter settlements and slums that offer little protection from damage or collapse when storms, incessant rain, and flash floods occur.

The Bengal delta region, comprising the ecosystem of the Sundarbans, is a hotspot of hydro-meteorological hazards. Cyclones damage large stretches of land through saltwater intrusion (affecting agriculture and fresh-water pisciculture) and reduce millions to homelessness. Rice fields are left brackish by storms that breach embankments while storm surges damage mud houses. The shrinking of the islands of the Sundarbans in West Bengal has forced many to migrate to cities. Research on climate refugees reveals the pattern of migration among workers prone to climate crisis.[1] Kerala and Tamil Nadu are among the preferred destination states for migration from the Sundarbans. During the 2018 floods in the state of Kerala, migrants working as construction laborers there were driven back to West Bengal to find work. Many migrants who under normal circumstances would travel from Kerala to their native towns in Bengal for celebrating the festival of Durga Puja had to stay in the state, while others were stuck in the Sundarban islands and could not go back to work because Kerala was dealing with the aftermath of the floods. Thus, climate migrants lose work opportunities and also struggle to find alternate means of livelihood.

The UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's 2022 assessment report includes India among the countries most vulnerable to climate change impacts, with populous cities like Kolkata and Mumbai at heightened risk. Both cities have experienced the growing disappearance of protective coastal and estuarine vegetation like mangrove and casuarina tree lines that reduce the magnitude of damage by climate hazards. Brief spells of heavy rain and cloudbursts are natural phenomena (though they may be triggered by growing heat-island effects in cities) but the larger question concerns these two cities' inadequate drainage systems and urban planning and management. Cities like Kolkata and Mumbai are prone to waterlogging, overflowing sewers in monsoon season, and floods. This is because of their lack of preparedness in terms of civic planning and drainage, considering the volume of rainwater that they receive owing to their location along the coast and on the trajectory of the monsoon winds. The migrant labor population living in the squatter settlements of India's mega-cities is the one worst hit by floods. Other million-plus cities like Bengaluru and Pune in southern India are similarly grappling with the paralyses of climate crisis in 2022.

Climate deviation from the norm induces disasters and therefore must be an important consideration in capacity building and policy formulation, with special provisions for rehabilitating displaced persons and social and environmental protection.

Under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, the state aims at providing one hundred days of employment per year for every rural household and a further fifty days' additional employment in areas affected by climate hazards to create climate resilience and help vulnerable households recover from climatic events. However, this scheme has not had much impact due to operational issues. ◁

1) Jayanta Basu, "India: Migrant Workers Turn Climate Refugees Twice Over," *Prevention Web,* November 5, 2018, www.preventionweb.net/news/view/61684, accessed March 4, 2022.

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Listening to the Voices of Survivors of Human Trafficking

BY MILICA KRAVIĆ AKSAMIT

The case of the migrant women who survived human trafficking and became activists in an advocacy group in Serbia is an encouraging example of how local as well as international anti-trafficking policies might be improved.

Photo: Marija Piroški

Victims of human trafficking can tell us a lot. But are we ready to hear their voices? And why is it important to listen to them? In Serbia, like in many other countries, most victims of human trafficking are citizens of the country although the Centre for Human Trafficking Victims' Protection in Belgrade has over the past few years also received reports that some migrants living in the country may have been trafficked. Considering that overcoming the trauma of being trafficked can last several years, and that that period is longer and the healing is more complex if survivors are refugees, the experience of those people deserve special attention.

After the traumatic experience of being trafficked, life literally starts from scratch, especially for women or children who experienced exploitation by people who are very close to them—their parents, acquaintances, and friends; people from whom they expected support or who were role models for them. "For refugee women victims of gender-based violence or human trafficking, recovery takes even more time," says Lidija Đorđević from the NGO ATINA—Citizens Association for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and All Forms of Gender-Based Violence.

"Everyone must have their right to accurate information about the procedure of obtaining asylum, but also about education, work, medical assistance, and many other things. I didn't know that myself," says a girl from Burundi who survived human trafficking and is now living in Serbia. She describes how protracted asylum procedures slow down the integration process for women having to restart their lives from scratch in Serbia. "Waiting for a final decision on asylum is exhausting. In addition, women need special support for their personal development, away from their daily routine. Life in a camp is not real life." Envisioning a future in which women's voices are heard, she joined Women on the Way, an advocacy group for migrant women supported by ATINA. In it, she says, "the voice of refugees, of those who survived various forms of violence, is heard, recognized, and respected. Strength lies in all of us and we must support each other."

Women on the Way consists primarily of female activists who gravitate around ATINA. They share the difficult experience of refugees who escaped not only from war but also from discrimination, violence, and oppression just because they are women. "They set out to reach a place where they would live their lives as they want, have their rights respected, have the right to education and dignified work. That is what they have in common and what makes the core of their struggles and ideas," explains Đorđević.

ATINA provides every victim in Serbia with safe and secure housing, medical assistance, and psychological and material support. Đorđević says: "If legal proceedings are ongoing, we try to provide legal aid and support as well as the right to a recovery period. Unfortunately, the material support and aid from the state that, according to the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, should be regular is missing. The establishment of a special fund for victims is something we have been working on for a decade. However we have not succeeded to this day in establishing it in Serbia."

Referring to the Serbian legal framework, Mitar Đurašković, formerly the country's national anti-trafficking coordinator, remarks that, although Serbia still does not have a fund for human trafficking survivors, the legislation has been improved in recent years. "I think that it is in line with international legal requirements, it even exceeds them," he said. "In November 2021, we got a new institution, the National Rapporteur on Trafficking in Human Beings, which now monitors the implementation of and respect for the human rights of victims of human trafficking. That is an excellent legislative approach."

However, since the retirement of the last national anti-trafficking coordinator in August, this important position remains vacant. It is not clear when the next occupant will be appointed by the minister of interior—this is expected to happen after the long-awaited formation of the new Serbian government in October.

Melita Gruevska Graham, the head of the Anti-trafficking Department in the International Centre for Migration Policy Development in Vienna, regrets the lack of systematic consideration and inclusion of the voice of victims and survivors of human trafficking at the European level. Mentioning that advocacy groups of women are involved in Serbia's National Referral Mechanism, a very good practice thanks to ATINA, she notes that such national-level efforts are very rare. She points out, however, that it is not enough just to listen to the victims and to learn from their experience; it is also necessary to include them in anti-trafficking responses. "They must be involved as equal stakeholders in the development of anti-trafficking tools and mechanisms, sometimes even in operational responses such as providing direct assistance and protection to trafficking victims," Gruevska Graham concludes.

Helmut Sax from the Ludwig Boltzmann Institute of Fundamental and Human Rights in Vienna reports on a good practice he came across during his visit in Spain as part of the Council of Europe Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings. "We had a meeting with survivors of human trafficking who actually had found jobs there. This NGO did not only provide counselling services. Survivors really could work in a clothing business, in potteries, they could sell their own products. They also attend public events, report their own stories, and advocate raising awareness for human trafficking, pointing out that it is not a matter of the nineteenth century but a common phenomenon basically in all societies in the world."

Violent conflicts, food insecurity, energy crises, climate change, and environmental disasters have been and will remain major drivers of people fleeing countries around the world. Melita Gruevska Graham considers mobility a coping mechanism: "They are left with no viable option in their country of origin, therefore they need to look for a better life abroad. Closed borders increase the need for smuggling services, which in turn has a direct impact on peoples' vulnerabilities to exploitation and trafficking." Mitar Đurašković adds: "If half the planet lives on less than $5 a day, if almost a billion people live on less than $2.5 a day, if 700 million people go to bed hungry, these are all at-risk people who, unfortunately, in order to survive and feed their family accept risky offers."

When it comes to the questions of how to close the gap between principles and practice, and of what to do to overcome problems that persist notwithstanding any apt legal framework that may be in force, Helmut Sax suggests, "you need to involve different stakeholders including survivors of human trafficking; you can also include children to get feedback in order to develop recommendations how to improve anti-trafficking policies. We need to listen to their voices because otherwise we will remain in the realm of theory without having any effects on the ground!" ◁

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Decolonial Dissonance

BY SAURABH DUBE

In recent years, abiding urgencies of calls to decolonize have been accompanied by unproductive ambiguities surrounding the decolonial. How are we to understand such contrariety? Can the terms and textures of decolonize/decolonization and decolonial/decoloniality be rendered as critical optics and *prudent provocations unto knowledge and politics in the present?*[1]

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Animated by #Rhodes Must Fall, #BLM, #NativeLives-Matter, and intersecting immediacies, decolonial claims acquired poignancy during the long 2010s, stretching across diverse academic and activist arenas. Authoritarian populisms, intolerant nations, and predatory capitalisms were confronted with afterlives of slavery and apartheid, formations of settler colonialisms and national settlements, and jumbles of indigenous identities and sexual alterities—all entwined with common injuries of gender-race-caste-class. Compounding these scenarios are living specters of migrants and minorities, aggrandizing capital and climate change, and pervasive precarities and pandemics.

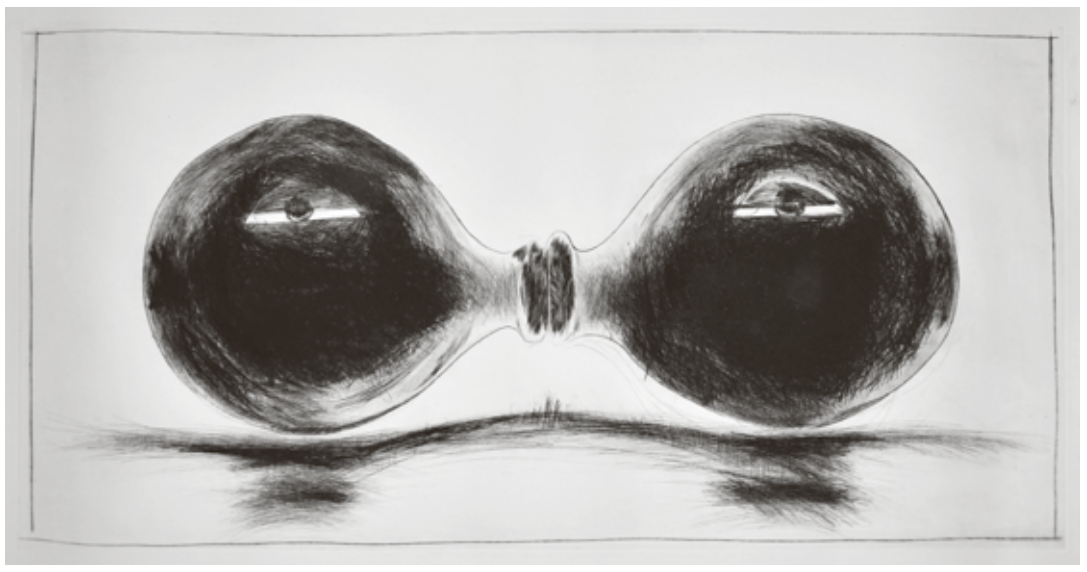
Amidst such churnings and yearnings, the proliferations of D-terms, as it were, have appeared as crisscrossing the exigencies of corporate academe. Invocations to decolonize announce progressive impulses to expand the Western canon, making more inclusive mainstream human sciences. Decolonial considerations also intimate a rethinking of slavery and race, colony and empire as shaping modern knowledges. Such endeavors to rework disciplinary domains and redress abiding asymmetries can rest upon principally programmatic manifestos toward impeccable decolonial transformation. Yet other exercises yoke principle unto practice, empirical-cum-conceptual, whether or not they fly decolonizing banners. At the same time, the sanitized multiculturalism of the neoliberal university has accommodated decolonial doodahs as profitable pathways to appease alterity. Meanwhile, abiding incitements to compulsively publish in scholarly markets have impelled, at once, varied usages of D-schemas as seeking disciplinary distinction *and* sharp rebuttals of decolonial excesses.

Unsurprisingly, on offer today are unhelpful abundances and unbalanced ambivalences of the decolonial. On the one hand, the presence of a dozen self-certified meanings of decolonize, from dense philosophical reflections through to New Age self-help endeavors. Among these connotations, especially influential have been decolonial designs out of Latin America, which seek the widest epistemological and social, cultural and moral makeovers through the pure force, *a priori* ethic, and unshakeable truth of transformative knowledge(s). None of these schemes are likely to simply disappear. On the other hand, in the early 2020s, with the decolonization metaphor stretched to its limits, the enthusiasm for decoloniality seems to be slowly waning, even wilting, including among its fellow travelers. Yet dismissive critiques of decolonizing desires frequently mirror the totalizing casts of the object of their derision, overlooking thereby the many meanings and pressing politics that inform uncertain yet insistent pleas to decolonize.

Rather more than the inexorable passing of a fashionable phantasm, under issue are formative decolonial tensions and their equally impatient contestations. Exactly for these reasons, our own rapidly melting present might be an especially apposite moment to stay with and think through decolonization and its dissonance: their apprehensions and aggrandizements, saliences and silences, and habitations and horizons.

At stake are formidable implications and mutual entailments of discipline and difference. These are contained in contending conceptions. On the one hand, always-prior "universals," commanding "origins" that severally announce the West as conquering and/or salvaging the primitive, the savage, the backward, the native, the non- and anti-modern. On the other hand, already-*a priori* alterities, counter epistemes, that innately subvert or/and subtend the colonial, the modern, the West, the North, the dominant, and other such dystopian categories-entities. Ahead indeed are competing claims yet common connections.

Concerning discipline, might we approach the non-nomothetic human sciences as critically registering the worldly intimacies, material implications, and archival tracks of institutionalized enquiries? That is, can such knowledges be apprehended not only as *modern disciplines* but as *disciplines of modernity?* I am pointing to formations of modernity and its particular disciplines as contradictory and contending procedures of meaning and power. Consider the framings of anthropology, history, and sociology as institutionalized enquiries from the latter half of the nineteenth century. These disciplines emerge out of sustained interchanges between race and reason, imperial cultures and progressivist imaginaries, the colonial and the native, Enlightenment and Romanticism, developmental narratives and redemptive nations, the analytical and the hermeneutical, and "autonomy" and "excess."



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Turning to difference, we are legitimately troubled by demonizing and infantilizing images of "other" peoples. Yet, what of implicit assumptions of the innate innocence of such subjects in radical-liberal understandings, including decolonial perspectives? What might explain the seductions of immaculate alterity as axiomatically exceeding dystopian power? Are we stuck with parables of scholarly transcendence, where an ethically enchanted alterity, a return of the repressed, serves just comeuppance to a ruthlessly disenchanted dominance?

To address such issues is to think through singular story lines, unframing rather distinct purification(s) and diverse worlding(s) across the planet of idealized oppositions between tradition and modernity, custom and rationality, myth and history, magic and the modern, East and West, and emotion and reason. To be untangled also are constitutively reciprocal yet already incompatible copulas between power and difference, authority and alterity. Arguably an outcome of jagged intersections of (Weberian) bureaucratic-rationalizing logics, modernization theories, and post-foundational presumptions, these copulas have been imbued with varied outcomes, especially amidst the impelling *im-mediations* today of social media that abound. Indeed, with their ineliminable tensions as sown into the social, the embodied, and the affective—of being *made* of the world—such oppositions issue other invitations.

A single provocation turning on the constitutive contentions of modern thought need suffice. How might we hold together David Hume's far-reaching querying of an abstract reason *and* the racial framings integral to the developmentalism upholding his thought? If the former reveals the formative not-oneness of the European Enlightenment, does not the latter highlight that Hume's radical skepticism was yet unable to enter the deep, dark recesses of progressivist premises? Are at play acute intersections *and* critical contentions of reason and race in the institutionalization of the human sciences?

In these makeovers of modernity, rather than ready resolutions of difference and discipline, it is crucial to modestly admit and carefully revisit the mix-up and murk, contention and creativity, passion and pathos, and dignity and drudgery of heterogeneous subjects, human and more-than-human. Here are to be found the mutual begetting of discipline and difference—as coming together, falling apart, and issuing other intimations—not via immaculate terms of Gnostic revelations but through tangled textures of earthly conceptions.

At the end, to ask what is at stake in the surfeit today of decolonial claims and their contestations is to track the unstated assumptions, formative heterogeneities, unexpected insights, and distinct registers of these terrains. These have wide implications. First, to overlook unfamiliar decolonial pathways and their challenges can be to ignore the imagining of the unimaginable in routine worlds. Second, pervasive presumptions of their innate innovativeness that characterize certified decoloniality are now revealed as common conceits, insinuating the business-as-usual of academic arenas, at large. Finally, foregrounded forthwith are the restless seductions of scholarly entitlement, professorial privilege, epistemic practice, and their intricate interweaving—in the corporate university and at its many margins.

Decolonial dissonance bears discrete disclosures. ◁

1) These issues are elaborated in a co-authored book-in-progress, *Decolonize: Three Enquiries in Discipline and Difference.*

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Zur Überproduktion von Geschlechterdifferenz in der Neurowissenschaft

VON ANELIS KAISER-TRUJILLO

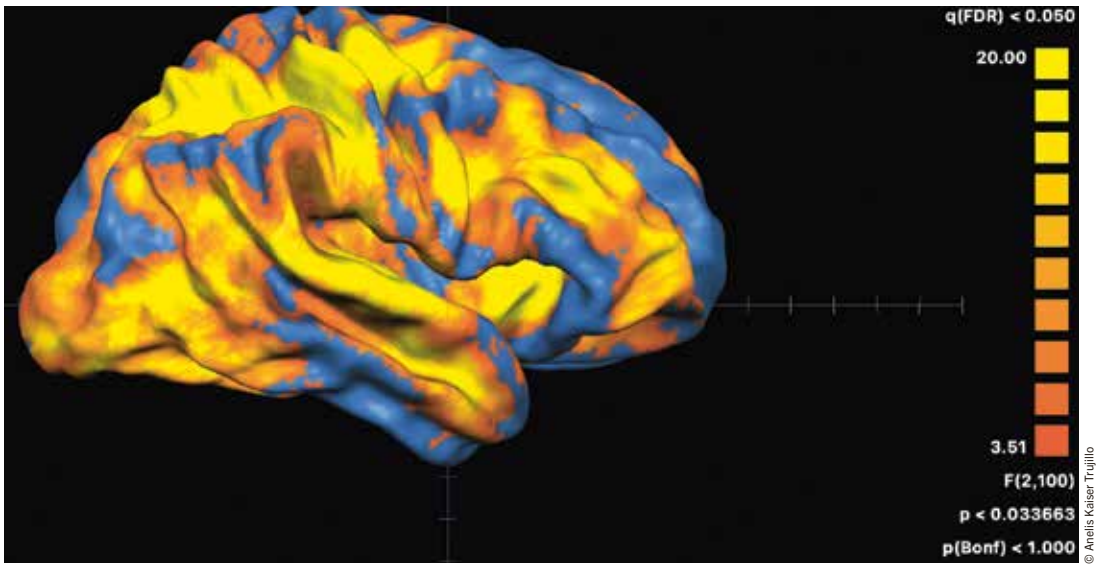
Die Neurowissenschaft zeigt Unterschiede in den Gehirnen von Frauen und Männern auf. Was bedeuten diese Unterschiede? Und für wen genau ist die Frage der Geschlechterdifferenz brisant, für die Gesellschaft oder für die Neurowissenschaft selbst?

Obwohl die Neurowissenschaft heute methodisch von Algorithmen der AI durchzogen ist, oder gerade deswegen, gilt sie nach wie vor als Leitwissenschaft in unserer Gesellschaft. Fragen danach, wie sich beispielsweise menschliches Verhalten aus dem Gehirn ableiten lässt, Erziehung neuroplastisch im Gehirn manifestiert oder Krankheiten aller Art auf unser Gehirn auswirken, werden heute mit bildgebenden Verfahren und oft basierend auf maschinellem Lernen untersucht.

Vor diesem Hintergrund erfreut sich die Frage, ob sich Frauen und Männer in ihren Gehirnen unterschieden, vor allem in den Medien und der Populärwissenschaft nach wie vor großer Beliebtheit. Die wissenschaftlichen Inhalte hierzu werden von der kognitiven Neurowissenschaft produziert, doch kann man auch davon ausgehen, dass innerhalb dieser Disziplin der Frage des Geschlechts systematisch nachgegangen wird?

Die „Frage des Geschlechts" bedeutet in der kognitiven Neurowissenschaft die „Suche nach Geschlechterdifferenzen". Ein solches wissenschaftliches Feld kann man innerhalb der besagten Wissenschaft kaum ausfindig machen, und doch gibt es Hunderte von Studien, die auf Unterschiede zwischen der Gruppe der Frauen und jener der Männer hinweisen. Wie erklärt sich das?

Die sogenannte Geschlechterdifferenzforschung lässt sich am Beispiel der bildgebenden Verfahren bis in die Anfänge dieser Methoden, also bis in die frühen 1990er Jahre, zurückverfolgen. Es wurden und werden in regelmäßigen Abständen signifikante Gruppenunterschiede, also Durchschnittswerte, zwischen der Gruppe der Frauen und der Gruppe der Männer in neurokognitiven Studien publiziert – meistens genau dann, wenn eine neue Methode entwickelt worden ist. Dieses Phänomen ließ sich sehr genau beobachten, als die Methoden MRI, fMRI, SPECT, TMS, oder einige ihrer spezifischen Untermethoden, wie *resting state fMRI* oder *functional connectivity,* entwickelt bzw. in der neurokognitiven Forschung am Menschen eingesetzt wurden: Wird eine Methode eingeführt, folgt kurze Zeit später mit Gewissheit eine Studie z.B. mit dem Titel „Resting state fMRI shows sex difference in …".



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Die Untersuchung der „Variable" Geschlecht ist ein dankbares Vehikel für die Einführung von neuen Messtechniken, wenn gerade keine spezifischere Frage zur Hand ist: die Gruppe von Teilnehmenden „besteht" ja fast immer aus der binären Gruppe von Frauen und Männern – nichtbinäre und genderfluide Identitäten bringen diese Praxis erst seit Kurzem leicht ins Schwanken. Da also die Wissenschaftler:innen in den Forschungsteams nicht primär am Thema Geschlecht interessiert sind und eine „klar" dichotome Gruppenvariable „von Natur aus" zur Untersuchung vorliegt, winkt die Chance eines signifikanten Ergebnisses und dessen Publikation. Geschlechtsunterschied als Nebenprodukt ist somit der häufigste Entstehungsweg von Geschlechterwissen im nichtklinischen Brain Imaging.

Weitere forschungspragmatische Gegebenheiten durchziehen dieses lose Feld der Geschlechterdifferenzen. Nicht auf den Knopf des Gruppenvergleichs zu drücken, könnte eine verpasste Chance auf eine Publikation mit dem Titel „Significant differences in the brain of women and men in …" bedeuten. Dies ist nicht harmlos, herrscht doch in der Neurowissenschaft eine „Jagd nach signifikanten Differenzen". Ohne signifikante Differenzen kein Resultat, ergo keine Publikation. Das führt zum allgemein bekannten Problem des Publikationsbias, das besagt, dass man sehr oft nur Unterschiede, nicht aber Nichtunterschiede publiziert, obwohl diese Nichtunterschiede Resultate sind, die die Welt gleichermaßen interessieren sollten. Studien, die keine Unterschiede aufweisen, landen in den Schubladen der Labore. Demgegenüber werden fast alle Studien, die Unterschiede aufzeigen, publiziert. Dieser Publikationsbias ist für die Geschlechterfrage besonders brisant. Man stelle sich also vor, wieviel Wissen über Ähnlichkeiten der Geschlechter nie das Tageslicht erblickt. Dieses Problem verstärkt sich in der Geschlechterdifferenzforschung durch falsch positive Fehler, die sich ergeben, wenn *a posteriori* nach Geschlechtsunterschieden gesucht wird, auch wenn es *a priori* keinen Grund gibt, dies zu tun. Dieser Fehler besagt, das eines von zwanzig Resultaten zufällig auftritt. Wenn also zwanzig Forscher:innen routinemäßig auf Geschlechtsunterschiede testen, dann wird ein:e Forscher:in, selbst wenn es keinen echten Unterschied zwischen den zwei untersuchten Geschlechtergruppen gibt, einen statistisch signifikanten Unterschied finden. Zusammengenommen führen diese Gegebenheiten dazu, dass sich die Populärwissenschaft und die Medien für diese Differenzen interessieren und sich das Bild von der fundamentalen neurobiologischen Differenz zwischen Frauen und Männern in der Gesellschaft hartnäckig festhält.

Aus dieser Perspektive kann von einer realen Forschungspraxis in der nichtklinischen Neurowissenschaft gesprochen werden, die in regelmäßigen Abständen Geschlechterdifferenzen in die Welt sendet; ein kohärentes Forschungsfeld in der Neurowissenschaft aber, das Geschlechtsunterschiede akkumuliert und theoretisch einordnet, gibt es nicht. Dies mag daran liegen, dass die bloße Akkumulation von Geschlechterdifferenzen der eigentliche Sinn und Zweck der Frage ist, oder auch, dass es nicht nötig erscheint, alle publizierten Differenzen einmal in eine erklärende neurologische Gesamttheorie der Geschlechter münden zu lassen.

Diesem frei flottierenden aber systematischen Entstehungsweg der Überproduktion von Geschlechtsunterschieden steht ein fester Zusammenschluss von Wissenschaftler:innen gegenüber, der intrinsisch motiviert, mit einem komplexen, nicht immer eindeutigen, bio-psycho-sozialen und intersektionalen Geschlecht in der Neurowissenschaft arbeitet. Das setzt Interdisziplinarität voraus. Die Forscher:innen dieses Netzwerkes wenden, in alter feministischer, naturwissenschaftskritischer Weise, ein situiertes, komplexes Modell von Geschlecht an. Das bedeutet eine kritische Berücksichtigung dessen, was als Differenz und was als Ähnlichkeit betrachtet wird, ein Ernstnehmen, dass Geschlecht auch Sozialisation bedeutet, eine Verschiebung des Fokus von Geschlecht auf Geschlechtsidentität und die Anerkennung der Tatsache, dass die Neurowissenschaft eine weiße, westliche Wissenschaft mit kolonialem Blut an den Händen ist. Und das alles bei gleichbleibender Beachtung der möglichen methodologisch-neurowissenschaftlichen Bias wie der oben erwähnten. Die Untersuchung von Geschlecht im Rahmen des Netzwerks *NeuroGenderings* (www.neurogenderings.org) ist also weder Zufall noch Standard-Routine; vielmehr gehen die Wissenschaftler:innen des Netzwerks dieser Fragestellung seit nunmehr über einem Jahrzehnt interdisziplinär und im Austausch miteinander nach. Ein Teil dieser Gruppe zieht wiederum vor, sich unter Einbezug von Geschlechterwissen auf die Disziplin der Neurowissenschaft zu beschränken, eine Praxis, die auch als *empirical neurofeminism* bezeichnet werden kann.

So konnte die israelische Neurowissenschaftlerin Daphna Joel zeigen, dass das „typische" Frauen- oder „typische" Männergehirn so extrem selten ist, dass von einer Gegenüberstellung von „weiblichem" versus „männlichem" Gehirn kaum die Rede sein kann. Nachdem „Vorhersagbarkeit" – wie in fast allen naturwissenschaftlichen methodischen Werkzeugen – das Schlüsselprinzip der Erkenntnis geworden ist, fand „predictability" auch in die neurowissenschaftliche Praxis Eingang. Die spanische Neurowissenschaftlerin Carla Sanchis-Segura weist darauf hin, wie in den meisten bisher publizieren Studien zur multivariaten Analyse des Themas Gehirn und Geschlecht Vorhersagbarkeit mit Klassifikationsgenauigkeit verwechselt wurde. Häufig wird die hohe Klassifizierungsgenauigkeit von Machine-Learning-Algorithmen fälschlicherweise so interpretiert, als ob sie große Unterschiede zwischen männlichen und weiblichen Gehirnen aufzeige. Dabei werden die Kennzahlen der Klassifizierungen zur direkten Schätzung des Grades der statistischen Unterscheidbarkeit der Gehirne von Frauen und Männern verwendet und so die Existenz von männlichen bzw. weiblichen Gehirnen „bestätigt" – ein falscher Schluss, denn Klassifizierung und Schätzung sind unterschiedliche Konzepte.

Es sieht ganz danach aus, als ob sich die neuen AI-Algorithmen in die Reihe der Vehikel einordnen lassen, welche eine klare Geschlechterbinarität reproduzieren, natürlich zeitgerecht in Form der Vorhersagbarkeit. Durch die multivariaten Ansätze könnten jedoch gerade Methoden des maschinellen Lernens die Möglichkeit bieten, Dichotomien aufzubrechen. Werden wir diese Chance noch nutzen? ◁

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Welcher Murakami?

VON IRMELA HIJIYA-KIRSCHNEREIT

Murakami ist ein japanischer Familienname, nicht ungewöhnlich. Es gibt viele Murakamis. Auch einige in der Gegenwartsliteratur, von der hier die Rede sein soll. Ein *Murakami, der mit dem Vornamen Haruki, steht schon seit einiger Zeit für Größeres, er scheint geradezu die japanische Literatur als Ganzes zu repräsentieren. Wie das? Und was heißt hier eigentlich „japanische Literatur"?*

Haruki, besagter Murakami, erschien als Shooting Star in den frühen 1980er Jahren auf der literarischen Bühne Japans. Damals, er war gerade mal dreißig, verdiente er sich seinen Lebensunterhalt mehr schlecht als recht mit einem Kneipencafé, das ihm zumindest die Chance bot, den ganzen Tag lang Jazz zu hören und spät nachts nach Kneipenschluss am Küchentisch Texte zu schreiben. *Hör das Lied des Windes (Kaze no uta o kike),* 1979 auf Japanisch publiziert und 35 Jahre später erst unter dem Titel *Wenn der Wind singt* auch auf Deutsch veröffentlicht, war eine lose Folge von bittersüßen Erinnerungen an den Sommer 1970, die eigene Studienzeit, Liebesleid, Selbstfindung und Popkultur, brachte ihm gleich einen Preis für Nachwuchswissenschaftler ein und wurde 1981 verfilmt. Damit begann eine recht märchenhafte Karriere. Murakami schrieb Roman um Roman, darunter 1982 *Wilde Schafsjagd,* sein erstes, 1991 auf Deutsch erschienenes Buch, auf das, ebenfalls noch im Insel Verlag, 1995 *Hard-boiled Wonderland und das Ende der Welt* folgte. Noch war der Abstand zwischen Erstpublikation und Übersetzung groß, auch wenn schon in den 1980er Jahren erste Erzählungen in kongenialen Übersetzungen seines Entdeckers für das Deutsche, Jürgen Stalph, kursierten, unter neugierig machenden, witzigen Titeln wie *Der Untergang des Römischen Reiches – Der Indianeraufstand von 1881 – Hitlers Einfall in Polen* – und die *Sturmwelt,* 1987 in der *Neuen Rundschau* abgedruckt. Wer die japanische Literaturszene im Blick hatte, konnte Murakami in den 1980er Jahren nicht mehr übersehen. Er hatte sich, mit regelmäßig siebenstelligen Verkaufszahlen, daheim bereits zum Superstar entwickelt. Es bedurfte dazu also nicht erst englischer Versionen oder seiner amerikanischen Agentur. Die aber verweigerte in der Folge, dass Titel, die noch nicht ins Englische übersetzt waren, auf Deutsch erscheinen konnten – eine Erfahrung, die ich selber als Herausgeberin der Japanischen Bibliothek im Insel Verlag machen musste. Denn wir hatten uns eigentlich ein anderes Buch vorgestellt, als das, was wir dann brachten – weil wir auf Murakami nicht verzichten wollten. So entstand der Eindruck– sowohl in Japan selbst wie auch im Ausland –, dass dieser Autor – oder auch japanische Literatur allgemein – nur durch Übersetzungen ins Englische zugänglich sei und sich alle, die ihn übertragen wollten, in welche Sprache auch immer außer Englisch, der vorhandenen anglophonen Texte von ihm bedienten. Geradezu, als seien nur Englisch-Übersetzer in der Lage, ein japanisches Buch aus der Originalsprache zu übertragen. Man unterstellte offen oder auch unbewusst, dass Übersetzer für andere Sprachen auf eine Vermittlung über das Englische angewiesen wären und es sich letztlich um Zweitübersetzungen handelte, handeln müsse. Für japanische Leser und Autoren bedeutete das mit anderen Worten: Das Tor zur Welt für ihre Literatur ist das Englische!

Nun trifft das, wie einige von uns wissen, zum Glück nicht zu: Es gibt Autorinnen wie Yoshimoto Banana, deren gleichfalls kometenhafter Aufstieg auch in die 1980er Jahre fällt, weshalb man in Japan vom „Haruki-Banana-Phänomen" sprach, und die ihren Weg zu internationaler Bekanntheit über andere Sprachen nahmen. In Yoshimotos Fall war das Italienisch, für die Autorinnen Taeko Kōno oder Hiromi Itō war es das Deutsche, um nur diese Beispiele zu nennen. Gewiß, keine japanische Autorin, auch kein Autor, reicht an Murakamis Status als globaler Autor heran. Und so bleibt natürlich die Frage, was denn die spezielle Qualität von Murakamis Literatur ausmacht, dass sie sich international so breit durchsetzen kann.

Aber vielleicht sollten wir zuerst einmal fragen: Ist denn der englische Murakami derselbe wie der japanische? Und wie der deutsche? Worin unterscheiden sich die Versionen eigentlich? Abgesehen von der Sprache. Doch da, bei der Sprache, fängt die Sache natürlich an. Was sich, rein übersetzungstechnisch, schon an Differenzen ergibt, wenn man zwischen eng verwandten Sprachen übersetzt, ist ein großes Thema. Doch lassen wir dieses Fass einmal ungeöffnet. Klar ist, dass bei sprachstrukturell und kulturell so distanten Einheiten wie Japanisch und Englisch oder Deutsch eine noch breitere Palette an Übersetzungsoptionen besteht als zwischen nahen Verwandten. Aber es gibt auch gesellschaftliche Regeln, Lesevorlieben und Tabus in der Zielsprache, die das Übersetzungsgeschehen mitbestimmen und die zum Teil recht rigoros eingefordert werden. Dabei wäre gar nicht in erster Linie an die inzwischen in vielen Sprachen aktive

„woke" Sittenwacht zu denken. Sondern, da ja das Englische bzw. Amerikanische hier als Brückenversion oder, besser, als eine Art Template fungiert, müssten auch Eigenheiten des US-Literaturmarkts in Betracht gezogen werden. Da lässt sich in Bezug auf japanische Literatur nämlich festhalten, dass amerikanische Lektoren und Verlage viel stärker in die Übersetzungen eingreifen als etwa in Mitteleuropa. Sie kürzen, ergänzen, stellen um und redigieren die Bücher bisweilen so stark, dass das sogar im Impressum vermerkt wird. Die ziemlich schräge Geschichte, weshalb dies überhaupt zum Thema und zum Anlass für eine Reihe gewundener Selbstrechtfertigungen des Autors wurde, sei hier nur angedeutet. Sie führt uns ins ferne Deutschland und Österreich, wo zwischen 1988 und 2001 die legendäre Büchersendung „Das literarische Quartett" ausgestrahlt wurde. Und ausgerechnet ein Eklat bei der Besprechung von Murakamis aktuellem Roman *Gefährliche Geliebte* führte schließlich zur Einstellung des Programms. Auf YouTube ist die unterhaltsame Sendung immerhin noch präsent.

In der breiten öffentlichen Debatte, die der Verkaufszahlen fördernde Streit um den Murakami-Roman damals auslöste, spielte die Frage eine Rolle, weshalb der Autor denn eine Zweitübersetzung aus dem Englischen nicht nur zugelassen, sondern anscheinend sogar eingefordert hatte. Die verblüffende Antwort, auf diversen Kanälen lanciert, lautete, dass es ihm um die Schnelligkeit der Publikation ging. Schnelligkeit durch Warten auf die englische Fassung? Das klingt einigermaßen paradox. Zumal seither nicht wenige seiner Werke, gerade auch die besonders langen wie der dreiteilige Roman *1Q84* (deutsch 2010 und 2011, englisch 2011), *Die Pilgerjahre des farblosen Herrn Tazaki* (deutsch Jan. 2014, englisch Aug. 2014) oder *Die Ermordung des Commendatore I und II* (deutsch Jan. und Apr. 2018, englisch Okt. 2018) in der Direktübersetzung früher auf Deutsch als auf Englisch erschienen sind!

Viel wesentlicher aber als Schnelligkeit ist wohl die Frage, die ich bereits Anfang 2001 in einer kritischen japanischen Zeitschrift aufwarf: Ob nicht Murakamis Priorisierung anglophoner Fassungen, ihre Erhebung zum Mastertext für die Übersetzung in andere Sprachen als – bewusster oder unbewusster – US-Kulturimperialismus gelten müsse. Ich sprach seinerzeit auch von einer Tendenz zur Hollywoodisierung der japanischen Literatur, wenn nach Murakamischem Muster die japanische Originalfassung als lokale Variante eingestuft würde, der gegenüber der Autor die überarbeitete amerikanische Textfassung als Grundlage für die weltweite Verbreitung betrachten wolle.

Zwar beteuerte der Autor seither wiederholt, Direktübersetzungen seien wünschenswert, aber bei Übersetzungen in „kleinere Sprachen" sei es ihm allemal lieber, wenn deren Leser ihren Murakami zeitnah aus der vorliegenden englischen Fassung transponiert bekämen. Es spräche einfach viel für Zweitübersetzungen, er könne seine Vorliebe nicht leugnen. Zumal man sich den Tatsachen zu stellen habe – Englisch sei nun einmal die *lingua franca* im Business, und New York der Nabel der Verlagswelt. Sein Gegenüber bei dieser 2000 in Buchform publizierten *Feierabend-Plauderei zum Übersetzen* ist Tomoyuki Shibata, beide sind als Meisterübersetzer aus dem Amerikanischen bekannt. Verständlich, dass hier niemand mit Fragen einhakt. Die müssen wohl aus einer anderen Ecke kommen. Doch zurück zu Murakamis Betriebsgeheimnis.

Dass dieser Autor von Anfang an eine besondere Affinität zur US-Literatur hegte, belegt schon die Legende von seinen Schreibanfängen. Im ersten *Küchentischroman* probiert der namenlose Ich-Erzähler herum, bis er auf die Idee kommt, seinen Text auf Englisch zu schreiben und ihn ins Japanische rückzuübersetzen. Und voilà, sein Stil ist gefunden! Die von vielen Kommentatoren tropfnass aus dem Roman in seine Vita eingebaute Saga wird Jahrzehnte später vom Autor selbst in seinen Essays unter dem Titel *Von Beruf Schriftsteller* beglaubigt (oder verfestigt?). Egal, wer kann schon wissen, wie es damals wirklich war? Er habe einen „flexiblen, ‚neutralen' Stil" schaffen wollen, „einen eigenen natürlichen Erzählton kreieren, der von dem üblichen ‚romanhaften Stil' der sogenannten ‚Hochliteratur' möglichst weit entfernt war", schreibt er 2015. Das ist ihm allem Anschein nach gelungen. Und wenn das ein wenig nach Übersetzung klingen sollte, was soll's!

Sein amerikanischer Übersetzer Jay Rubin eilte ihm mit weiteren Beteuerungen zu Hilfe: Die Kürzungen, die er vorgenommen habe, beruhten auf Umfangsvorgaben des Verlags. Außerdem habe er bei dieser Gelegenheit auch die vielen Widersprüchlichkeiten im *Aufziehvogel*-Plot bereinigen können. Auf Deutsch haben wir seit 2020 auch eine Direktübersetzung und können vergleichen. Aber wer weiß: vielleicht hat Murakami seinen Text inzwischen selber wieder umgeschrieben. Auch das nämlich passiert, beispielsweise mit seinen beiden witzigen *Bäckereiüberfall*-Erzählungen von 1981 und 1985, schon 1988 und 1994 verdeutscht, die mit den Illustrationen von Kat Menschik auch in einer japanischen Ausgabe erschienen sind. Da gesteht Murakami im Nachwort, dass er bei dieser Gelegenheit noch einmal Hand an die Texte gelegt habe. Wo und warum, verrät er nicht.

Vieles ist und bleibt geheimnisvoll, nicht nur in Murakamis Texten, sondern auch drumherum. Da gibt es Übersetzer, die verschwinden, und Fake-Übersetzer, die es gar nicht gibt. Und fluide Textgestalten, so dass man sich stets fragt oder fragen sollte: welcher Murakami? Danach steht noch die Frage im Raum: Wie japanisch ist und was macht Haruki Murakami zum globalen Autor? ◁

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Peter Demetz zu seinem 100. Geburtstag

VON KLAUS NELLEN

Am 21. Oktober 2022 feierte der Literaturwissenschaftler Peter Demetz, Bürger vieler Welten und Vermittler zwischen dem alten und dem neuen Kontinent, seinen 100. Geburtstag.

Peter Demetz am IWM (*Protectorate Prague 1939–1945: Cultural Life in an Occupied City,* Tuesday Lecture, 17. Oktober 2006).

Alle Lebensläufe sind Narrative, also konstruiert, und von sich selbst sagte Demetz einmal: „Mein Lebenslauf scheint mir noch mehr an Fiktionalität zu besitzen, als es schicklich sein sollte; wie ein Charakter in einem Stück Max Frischs, kann ich mich des Eindrucks nicht erwehren, dass es hätte auch ganz anders kommen können. Ich saß zeitlebens zwischen drei Stühlen und fühlte mich sozusagen levitierend am wohlsten. Ich will damit sagen, dass ich im alt-neuen Prag geboren bin; mein Vater ist von Südtiroler und katholischer Herkunft, meine Mutter kam aus einer tschechisch-jüdischen Familie vom flachen Lande, und quer durch die Sippe gingen die Trennungen der Religion, der Sprache und der politischen Neigungen, die es mir zeitlebens unmöglich gemacht haben, mich dem einen oder anderen ganz ohne ironischen Rest zu verschreiben."[1]

Das IWM hatte das große Glück, diesen inkommensurablen Geist schon früh als regelmäßigen Gast zu haben. Demetz' reiches Leben und Werk werden in diesen Tagen im internationalen Feuilleton gewürdigt, und so beschränken wir uns auf einen Ausschnitt, nämlich auf den unschätzbaren Beitrag, den er über viele Jahre zum intellektuellen Leben des Instituts für die Wissenschaften vom Menschen geleistet hat.

Zum ersten Mal kam Peter Demetz 1991 als Visiting Fellow ans Institut, um an der Herausgabe eines Bandes mit unveröffentlichten Schriften T.G. Masaryks zu arbeiten (*Polemiken und Essays zur russischen und europäischen Literatur- und Geistesgeschichte,* erschienen 1995). In jenem Jahr trat er auch der Jury des Paul-Celan-Übersetzungsprogramms bei. Es folgten zahlreiche weitere Aufenthalte, immer verbunden mit den Forschungen, die ihn jeweils beschäftigten, und oft begleitet von Vorträgen – über den italienischen Futurismus, über Masaryks Faust, über den Mythos vom magischen Prag, über Sprachphilosophie im tschechischen Nationalitätenkonflikt, über die Prager Filmproduktion in den Jahren der deutschen Besatzung – um nur einige zu nennen. Darüber hinaus nahm Demetz oft an Konferenzen und Workshops des IWM teil, wo seine Diskussionsbeiträge stets geschätzt waren.

Bereits 1993 wurde er Korrespondierendes Mitglied des IWM und kam im selben Jahr wieder ans IWM, um zu seinem Buch *Prague in Black and Gold: Scenes in the Life of a European City* zu recherchieren (erschienen 1997). Es ist der Versuch, den Blick auf die von Stereotypen verstellte Geschichte der Stadt zu öffnen. Die Präsentation der deutschen Ausgabe fand 1998 am Institut im Rahmen eines denkwürdigen Gesprächs mit Karl Schwarzenberg statt. 1996 wurde Demetz Mitglied des Redaktionskomitees von *Transit.* Die Zeitschrift des Instituts ist stolz auf die zahlreichen, in seinem unverwechselbar lakonischen Stil geschriebenen Artikel, die er beigesteuert hat.

An dieser Stelle sei auf den zum Zentenarium im Wallstein Verlag erschienenen Band *Was wir wiederlesen wollen* hingewiesen, der literarische Essays aus den Jahren 1960 bis 2010 versammelt.

Peter ist ein großer Kinogeher, von Kindesbeinen an. Wenn er in Wien war, besuchte er fast jeden Abend das – inzwischen geschlossene – Bellaria-Kino, um Filme aus vergangenen Zeiten zu sehen. In der letzten Dekade beschäftigte sich Demetz intensiv mit der politischen Geschichte des Films. Sein Buch *Diktatoren im Kino: Lenin – Mussolini – Hitler – Goebbels – Stalin* erschien 2019. Aber das Interesse am Film entsprang eben auch persönlichen Erlebnissen, die sich in seinen frühen Brünner Kinoerinnerungen niederschlugen, nachzulesen in *Transit* 41 (2011).

Als ich Peter letztes Jahr per Zoom zu seinem 99. Geburtstag gratulierte, nannte er am Ende unseres Gesprächs einige Titel Fachliteratur zu Kafka, die der Bibliotheksdienst des IWM ihm wie stets bereitstellen möge für seinen nächsten Besuch am IWM. Dieses Jahr kann Peter leider nicht kommen, aber wir freuen uns schon darauf, ihn im nächsten hier wieder begrüßen zu dürfen. ◁

1) 1977 anlässlich seiner Aufnahme in die Deutsche Akademie für Sprache und Dichtung, www.deutscheakademie.de/de/akademie/mitglieder/peter-demetz/selbstvorstellung

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Leningrader Untergrund und die Rückkehr der Poesie

VON JULIAN POKAY

Im Leningrad der Nachkriegsjahre wuchs eine Generation heran, welche maßgeblich an der Wiederbelebung der Poesie beteiligt war. Nach und nach formten der zukünftige Nobelpreisträger Joseph Brodsky und viele andere, heute vergessene Künstler:innen eine zweite, der offiziellen Kultur entgegengesetzte Strömung, die u.a. den Samisdat hervorbrachte.

St. Petersburg, Pompeji

Seit 1991 gibt es wieder ein St. Petersburg. Die politischen Ereignisse widerspiegelnd, wurde die Stadt im Lauf seiner jungen Geschichte in Petrograd und Leningrad umbenannt, was viele Bewohner nicht davon abhielt, sie liebevoll „Piter" zu nennen. Von Zar Peter dem Großen aus den Sümpfen einer dem Menschen feindlich gesinnten nördlichen Landschaft gestampft, entwickelte sich die als Fenster nach Europa angelegte Stadt trotz ihrer überwältigenden Pracht zum Schauplatz eines tragischen Schicksals, welches man heutzutage vielerorts erahnen kann. Spaziert man den Newski-Prospekt – eine der Hauptstraßen und bekanntesten Flaniermeilen der Stadt – entlang in Richtung der „ewigen, kühlen Newa", die goldene Spitze der Admiralität stets im Blickfeld, muss man genau hinschauen (und -hören), um hinter den Fassaden der Palais, Kirchen und Kaufhäuser das Pompeji vergangener Tage zu erkennen.

Eine ganz besondere Bedeutung wurde der Stadt in der russischen Literatur zuteil, die in dem Dichter Alexander Puschkin ihren Gründungsvater sieht. Den Stellenwert des Petersburger Mythos in der Selbstidentifizierung der Russ:innen hervorhebend, sprach der Kulturwissenschaftler Wladimir Toporow vom „Petersburger Text der russischen Literatur" – einer textuellen Verkörperung der Stadt, in welcher sich das Reale und das Fiktive überschneiden, ergänzen und widerlegen.

Photo: cameralabs.org

Leonid Bogdanov: *Leningrad 1975* (Aus dem Album *Leningradski Fotoandegraund*).

Die Vergeudung der Dichter

Nach dem bolschewistischen Umsturz kam das literarische Leben der Stadt langsam zum Erliegen. Der Tod zweier Petersburger Dichter im August 1921 – Alexander Blok und Nikolai Gumiljow – leitete das Ende des sogenannten Silbernen Zeitalters ein, einer der ergiebigsten Phasen der russischen Literatur. Die literarische Evolution wurde von einer Generation unterbrochen, die „ihre Dichter vergeudet hat". Es folgten die düsteren Jahre von Stalins Gewaltherrschaft, der Rote Terror sowie der Große Vaterländische Krieg mit der Leningrader Blockade. Mit wenigen Ausnahmen musste sich die Literatur dem während des ersten Allunionskongresses der sowjetischen Schriftsteller:innen im August 1934 proklamierten sozialistischen Realismus fügen, der fortan zur verbindlichen künstlerischen Methode wurde. Im engen Rahmen des Sozrealismus war künstlerische Freiheit nicht vorgesehen; jedes noch so schwache Aufleuchten von Individualität wurde als konterrevolutionär und systemkritisch erachtet. Der Staatsapparat zeigte damit abermals, dass die Unterdrückung der Meinungsfreiheit und des freien, den Anschluss an die Weltkultur suchenden Wortes *sensu stricto* zu seinen wichtigsten Kontrollinstrumenten gehörte. Dem künstlerischen Wort wurde in Russland von Anfang an der Kampf angesagt, sodass es immer wieder in den Untergrund flüchten musste. An der Zähmung des Wortes waren nicht nur staatliche Bürokraten beteiligt, sondern auch die Herrschenden selbst: 1826 erklärte Zar Nikolas I., er würde die Rolle des persönlichen Zensors des bereits erwähnten Alexander Puschkin übernehmen; 1934 erhielt Boris Pasternak, Dichter und zukünftiger Autor des Romans *Doktor Schiwago,* einen Anruf von Josef Stalin höchstpersönlich, der ihn über seinen Dichterkollegen Ossip Mandelstam befragte. Wie sehr mussten doch die Herrscher die Macht des Wortes fürchten, dass sie sich entschließen, direkt in den literarischen Prozess einzugreifen?

Die Anfänge des Samisdat

Die Nachkriegsjahre waren von Trostlosigkeit und Desillusionierung geprägt: Obwohl die Literatur nach dem Angriff Deutschlands auf die Sowjetunion mehr Freiheiten genoss – es galt schließlich, einen Krieg zu gewinnen – und dadurch gewisse Hoffnungen geweckt wurden, wurde sie nach dem Krieg wieder dem repressiven Staatsapparat untergeordnet. Die Leningrader Literat:innen befanden sich in einer schwierigeren Lage als ihre Moskauer Kollegen:innen. Da der administrativ-ideologische Druck einerseits von der Zentrale in Moskau, andererseits von örtlichen Behörden ausging, blieben den Schriftsteller:innen in der „nördlichen Hauptstadt" wenig künstlerische Freiheiten. Dies hatte zur Folge, dass sich eine inoffizielle kulturelle Strömung zu formieren begann, welche schließlich den Samisdat hervorbrachte – die Selbstverlegung, -vervielfältigung und -verbreitung von Texten, welche aus unterschiedlichen Gründen nicht in der offiziellen Kultur erscheinen konnten. Eine der wichtigsten Funktionen des Samisdat war folglich der Schutz des freien Wortes, sprich: Gedankens. Es war auch sein Verdienst, dass die Kultur der vorrevolutionären russischen Welt – einem verloren geglaubten Paradies – erhalten blieb und, wie Nadeschda Mandelstam, Ossip Mandelstams Witwe, bemerkte, ein neuer, äußert feinfühliger Leser geboren wurde, welcher imstande war, die Spuren des „Pompeji des Nordens" zu bemerken und zu lesen.

Die inoffizielle Kultur der Nachkriegsjahre (spätere Selbstbezeichnungen waren u.a. „zweite Kultur", „nonkonformistische Kultur", „Andegraund" [sic]) befasste sich zunächst nicht mit dem illegalen Kopieren von Texten, sondern von Musik. Vinyl war in der Sowjetunion Mangelware, was einige erfinderische Köpfe – allen voran Boris Tajgin (eigentlich Boris Pawlinow), der später auch einen Samisdat-Verlag gründete – dazu verleitete, von Krankenhäusern entsorgte Röntgenbilder zu verfremden und als Vinyl-Ersatz zu benutzen. Die Aufnahmen wurden zurechtgeschnitten und mit Musik bespielt: Auf diese Weise entstand „Musik auf Rippen". Für diese Palimpseste der besonderen Art bezahlte Tajgin mit einigen Jahren Haft in einem GULAG-Lager.

Das Kontinuum der Dichtung

Tajgin gehörte einer außergewöhnlichen Generation an, der wir zu großem Dank verpflichtet sind, da sie an der Rückkehr der Poesie in den literarischen Kanon beteiligt war. Es war eine Generation, die vor allem mit dem Dichter Joseph Brodsky in Verbindung gebracht wird. Seine Zugehörigkeit zu dieser Generation unterstreichend – für den Individualisten Brodsky ein überraschendes Zugeständnis – zollte er ihr in seiner Rede an der Schwedischen Königlichen Akademie Tribut, als er 1987 den Nobelpreis für Literatur entgegennahm. Als monolithische Präsenz in der russischen Literatur wirft Brodsky allerdings einen Schatten auf andere Vertreter:innen seiner Generation, deren Jugend und frühes Erwachsenenalter in die sogenannte Tauwetter-Periode fallen, eine Zeit der Entstalinisierung und mäßigen Liberalisierung unter Nikita Chruschtschow. Dabei wird oft übersehen, dass kreative Tätigkeit selten in vollkommener Isolation stattfindet, sondern auf das Zusammenspiel mit anderen Akteur:innen angewiesen ist. In der Leningrader Kulturszene der frühen 1950er Jahre waren unterschiedliche Formen von Netzwerken (Kreise, Künstlergruppen, LITOs, d.h. literarische Vereinigungen meist an Hochschulen), die zunächst an der Grenze zwischen offizieller und inoffizieller Kultur existierten und dann in den künstlerischen Untergrund übergingen, maßgeblich an der Wiederbelebung der Poesie und literarischen Tradition beteiligt. Eines der ersten Netzwerke dieser Art war der kleine Arefjew-Kreis, der noch in den 1940er Jahren entstand. Alexander Arefjew und seine Freunde waren von der Akademie der Künste verbannte Maler:innen, welche sich meistens in der Kommunalwohnung des Dichters Roald Mandelstam trafen (der letzte von ihnen, Walentin Gromow, verstarb am 9. Oktober dieses Jahres in St. Petersburg). Der „dritte Mandelstam", wie man ihn nennen könnte (nach Ossip Mandelstam und dem nach Paris emigrierten Jurij Mandelstam – familiäre Beziehungen sucht man hier vergeblich), war schwerkrank und starb im Alter von nur 28 Jahren. In seinem kurzen Leben schrieb er Gedichte, die in ihrer Form und Bildsprache an das Silberne Zeitalter erinnern und von Sehnsucht nach Weltkultur durchdrungen sind; kein einziges wurde zu seinen Lebzeiten publiziert. Manche nannten ihn den „letzten Dichter des Silbernen Zeitalters". Mandelstam selbst sah sich als *poète maudit:* aus der Gesellschaft verbannt, in der Weltkultur verankert. Mandelstam ist einer von vielen, die (wieder-)entdeckt werden *müssen,* um eine der düstersten Perioden in der russischen Literaturgeschichte besser verstehen zu können und das literarische Kontinuum wiederherzustellen. ◁

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Terminator oder Technologie als Bedrohung

VON LISA MEINECKE

Der Terminator *ist vielleicht das bekannteste Maschinenmonster der Hollywood-Filmgeschichte. Seit den 1980er Jahren ist Arnold Schwarzeneggers Paraderolle ein Sinnbild für die Angst vor der Macht der Technik.*

Es macht Spaß, in Österreich vom Terminator, dem steirischsten aller Killerroboter, zu erzählen, denn die Augen meiner Gesprächspartner:innen leuchten. *Terminator* ist natürlich nur eine von vielen Fallstudien in meinem Forschungsprojekt zur populärkulturellen Repräsentation von künstlicher Intelligenz. Zugegeben, die Serie von Action-Horror-Blockbustern ist nicht das intellektuellste aller Forschungsobjekte, nicht mal in meinem doch sehr eklektischen Quellenkorpus – für mehr Substanz sei es den Leser:innen geraten, sich etwa an *Blade Runner* (1982) oder die Serie *Westworld* (2015–2022) zu halten. Dennoch lohnt es sich, etwas ausführlicher über *Terminator* nachzudenken.

Das Franchise umfasst nicht nur eine Spielfilm-Reihe durchaus gemischter Qualität, sondern auch eine (leider kurzlebige) TV-Serie, Comics und eine große, weite Welt von Merchandising-Artikeln. Hier wollen wir uns, der Einfachheit halber, zunächst auf den ersten Film konzentrieren. Namensgebend ist der *Terminator* (Arnold Schwarzenegger), ein Killer-Cyborg aus einer postapokalyptischen Zukunft, der im ersten Film durch die Zeit zurückreist, um die junge Kellnerin Sarah Connor (Linda Hamilton) zu töten – zu Englisch: *to terminate* – weil diese die zukünftige Mutter von John Connor ist, der wiederum viele Jahre später als Anführer des menschlichen Widerstands den Krieg gegen die künstliche Intelligenz Skynet gewinnen wird.

Photo: Everett Collection / picturedesk.com

Terminator, **Arnold Schwarzenegger im Make-up, 1984.**

Der Cyborg

Das Wort *Cyborg* ist ein Schachtelwort aus *cybernetic* und *organism.* Es stammt ursprünglich aus einem US-amerikanischen Aufsatz aus dem Jahr 1960, in dem über Möglichkeiten spekuliert wurde, dass der menschliche Körper durch Medikamente und technologische Modifikationen für die Raumfahrt angepasst werden könne. Daraus ist nie wirklich etwas geworden; obwohl die Autoren des Aufsatzes Raumanzüge für viel zu umständlich hielten, kristallisierten sich diese als pragmatischere und wohl auch humanere Lösung für die bemannte Raumfahrt heraus. Das Konzept „Cyborg" jedoch verblieb als zunehmend mythisches Sinnbild für die Technologie des Kalten Kriegs im kulturellen Gedächtnis. In den Geistes- und Technikwissenschaften erlangte der Begriff Mitte der 1980er Jahre große Bekanntheit durch Donna Haraways einflussreiches „Manifesto für Cyborgs", in dem der Cyborg als Metapher für einen emanzipatorischen Umgang mit der technisierten Welt steht. Außerdem gibt es natürlich zahlreiche fiktive Cyborgs in der Populärkultur des angloamerikanischen Raums: *Darth Vader, RoboCop, die Borg,* die *Cybermen,* oder eben den *Terminator.* Mitte der 1980er Jahre ist der Cyborg also ein Teil des Zeitgeists.

Körper-Horror in *Terminator*

Der *Terminator* fällt hier in mancherlei Hinsicht aus dem Rahmen. Strenggenommen ist er kein sehr guter Cyborg, weil er kein menschliches Gehirn hat. Schwarzeneggers Haut, seine Haare, das Gesicht mit Augen und Ohren sind im Film nur eine dünne Hülle über einem monströsen Roboter. Die kybernetische Verbindung zwischen Maschine und Organismus ist hier ausdrücklich provisorisch, in der Diegese erfordert die Zeitmaschine einen unversehrten organischen Körper. Schwarzenegger hatte seine Bodybuilder-Karriere bereits einige Jahre zuvor an den Nagel gehängt und mit *Conan, der Barbar* (1982) erste Gehversuche in der Schauspielerei unternommen, *Terminator* war schließlich sein Durchbruch in Hollywood. Es ist keine große Sprechrolle, Dialoge beschränken sich weitestgehend auf knappe Einzeiler a lá „I'll be back". *Terminator* ist also vor allem ein Film über Schwarzeneggers hypermaskuline Körperlichkeit. Im Verlauf des Films wird die menschliche Hülle nach und nach zerstört, und das darunterliegende Roboter-Monster kommt zum Vorschein. Die organischen Teile des Cyborgs sterben nach und nach ab, weil sie eben ein künstliches Konstrukt sind und nicht wirklich lebendig. Dieser Körper-Horror kann in der Tradition von Mary Shellys *Frankenstein* (1818) gelesen werden und verweist auf die Verletzlichkeit des menschlichen Leibes im Kontrast zur physisch überlegenen Maschine. In späteren Filmen der Reihe, die weniger auf die Konventionen des Horror-Genres zurückgreifen, wird auf solche Darstellungen des organischen Verfalls fast vollständig verzichtet. Die Zerstörung von Schwarzeneggers Körper dagegen etabliert sich als filmübergreifende Bildsprache im Franchise.

Technologie und Technophobie

Terminator ist auch ein Film über Technologie und die Angst vor ihr. Selbstverständlich gab es 1984 keine realen Killerroboter in den Körpern von Bodybuildern, aber es ist durchaus bemerkenswert, wie viel Wert daraufgelegt wurde, den technologischen Aspekt des Horrors mit zeitgenössischer, alltäglicher Technik zu verknüpfen. Telefon und Anrufbeantworter werden Sarah Connor beinahe zum Verhängnis, weil der *Terminator* Kommunikationstechnologie überwachen kann. Der zeitreisende Soldat Kyle Reese erleidet eine Panikattacke beim Anblick von Baumaschinen. Durch die Augen des *Terminators* sehen wir die statistischen Berechnungen, die seinen Handlungen zugrunde liegen. *Skynet,* die künstliche Intelligenz, die in der nicht allzu fernen Zukunft die Roboterapokalypse auslösen wird, wird vom US-amerikanischen militärisch-industriellen Komplex als Computernetzwerk zur Verteidigung entworfen. Der resultierende Horror liegt also nicht nur in der Figur des *Terminators,* sondern in der dunklen Ahnung, dass sich die Gesellschaft schon in der Gegenwart zu stark auf Computertechnologie stützt. Der Großteil der zeitgenössischen Computer war schließlich immer noch Militärtechnologie, die für den Kalten Krieg entwickelt wurde, aber der Siegeszug des *Personal Computers* hatte schon gegen Ende der 1970er Jahre begonnen. Das Bedrohungsszenario, das *Terminator* zeichnet, spielt also ausdrücklich mit durchaus nicht unrealistischen Ängsten der Bevölkerung.

Der *Terminator* ist ursprünglich genau deshalb so gefährlich, weil er nur seiner vorprogrammierten Mission, Sarah Connor zu töten, folgt und nicht damit aufhören kann und wird, bis sein Computersystem vollständig zerstört ist. Die künstliche Intelligenz ist also zwar futuristisch und mächtig, aber paradoxerweise erstmal vergleichsweise dumm. Diese Schlussfolgerung spiegelt eine allgemeine Grundeinstellung zu künstlicher Intelligenz und Computertechnologie in den frühen 1980er Jahren wider: Sogenannte Expertensysteme waren aufwändig und nur in hochspezialisierten und streng abgegrenzten Bereichen anwendbar. Sie wurden als objektiv und effizient wahrgenommen, aber eben auch als steril, unflexibel und umständlich.

Ab 1991 wird der *Terminator* neu erfunden und kann nun eben doch zur lernfähigen Beschützerfigur umprogrammiert werden, wohl auch, weil Schwarzenegger doch lieber eine sympathischere Figur spielen wollte. Die recht simplen Grundbausteine der Handlung um Zeitreisen, Roboterapokalypsen, Verfolgungsjagden und Killermaschinen werden in den insgesamt sechs Fortsetzungen dann ohne größere Variation wiederholt. Was das *Terminator*-Franchise bis heute auszeichnet, ist der kluge Umgang mit kulturellen Ängsten, der jeweils an die soziopolitischen Umstände der Zeit angepasst wird. Beispielsweise entsteht *Terminator 3* (2003) klar beeinflusst durch die Ereignisse vom 11. September 2001; hervorgehoben wird die Heldenhaftigkeit US-amerikanischer Männer als letzte Hoffnung, wenn die Zeichen erneut auf Krieg stehen. Auch die Darstellung von Technik wird verändert. An Stelle der alten Militärcomputer treten Internet, Smartphones, Industrierobotik und autonome Drohnen. Die dargestellte technologische Bedrohung ist persönlicher, unsichtbarer und unmittelbarer geworden, weil die vollständig vernetzte Welt nicht mehr nur ein futuristischer Fiebertraum, sondern bereits gesellschaftliche Realität geworden ist. Der *Terminator* muss am Ende immer wieder aufs Neue vernichtet werden, obwohl er inzwischen ironisch und altersweise geworden ist. Die Zerstörung von Schwarzeneggers monströsem Cyborg-Körper ist schon lange als Sinnbild für die allgegenwärtige Bedrohung durch übermächtige technologische Kontrolle ins populärkulturelle Gedächtnis eingegangen. ◁

Lisa Meinecke ist Amerikanistin und Doktorandin an der Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München. 2022 war sie Digital Humanism Fellow am IWM.

Der gute Geist in der Maschine

VON KLAUS NELLEN

Kürzlich hat sich das Institut für die Wissenschaften vom Menschen von David Souček verabschiedet, seinem langgedienten Mitarbeiter, der nun in den Ruhestand geht.

Der IWM *Newsletter* Nr. 41 verzeichnet, dass David Souček am 1. Juli 1993 seine Stelle als EDV-Leiter angetreten habe, und meldet stolz, das IWM sei soeben mit einem Netzwerk ausgestattet worden und nun über die E-Mail-Adresse Y3131DAA@AWIUNI11.EDVZ.UNIVIE.AC.AT erreichbar.

Doch Davids Zusammenarbeit mit dem Institut reicht weiter zurück. 1986 suchten wir Unterstützung für den Aufbau des Patočka-Archivs am IWM. Ich hatte von einem Tschechen namens David Souček gehört, der den Nachlass des vom Prager Regime geächteten Philosophen und Dichters Ladislav Klíma (1878–1928) nach Wien gebracht hatte und an dessen Katalogisierung arbeitete. David, Sohn des Schriftstellers Ludvík Souček, kam aus dem Prager Underground, aus der Szene um die legendären Plastic People of the Universe, war im Samisdat aktiv gewesen und Unterzeichner der Charta 77. Als ich ihn zum ersten Mal besuchte, lebte er noch in einer kleinen, von der Regierung Kreisky zur Verfügung gestellten Wohnung am Rande von Wien, die nicht nur Klímas Schriften beherbergte, sondern vollgestopft war mit exquisiter Literatur und Kunst der tschechischen Moderne.

Ich konnte David dafür gewinnen, am IWM die aus Prag eingeschmuggelten Schriften Jan Patočkas zu ordnen und in eine Datenbank einzugeben (auf einem Computer namens Rainbow 100), auf deren Grundlage er später zusammen mit dem Patočka-Schüler Jiří Němec – ebenfalls ein Wiener Exilant – die erste umfassende Bibliographie des Prager Philosophen erstellte (erschienen 1997 tschechisch und 1999 deutsch, in Zusammenarbeit mit dem Prager Patočka-Archiv).

Der Institutsmagier mit seiner Computerapparatur (1998). *Unten:* Hereinspaziert: der Eingang zum IWM und zu dessen erster Website (1998).

Photo: IWM

David kam viele Jahre lang immer am Freitagnachmittag ins Institut. 1991/92 unterstützte er auch Peter Demetz, Visiting Fellow am IWM, bei der Herausgabe von T. G.

Masaryks *Polemiken und Essays zur russischen und europäischen Literatur- und Geistesgeschichte* (erschienen 1995); im Nachwort bedankte Demetz sich bei dem „Institutsmagier der Computerapparatur". Und nebenher gab David zwei Bände mit gesammelten Schriften Klímas heraus: *Victoria Aeterna* (tschechisch) und, zusammen mit Peter Sacher, *Postmortalien* (deutsch) – einer der ersten Titel im Übersetzungsprogramm des IWM.

1993 gelang es uns, David von seinem damaligen Brotjob loszueisen und für die neue Funktion eines EDV-Administrator zu engagieren, zusätzlich zur Betreuung des Patočka-Archivs. Dieser Schritt war nicht unkontrovers, tat David doch alles, um uns zu überzeugen, dass er für eine solche Aufgabe ungeeignet sei. Wir ließen es drauf ankommen, und schon bald erwies sich die Entscheidung als Glücksgriff. Neue Technologien wie Textverarbeitung, Netzwerke oder E-Mail entwickelten sich in jener Zeit rasant und wurden auch für unser kleines Institut erschwinglich; das World Wide Web wurde geboren und eröffnete eine neue Dimension für Wissen und Kommunikation. David arbeitete sich mit der ihm eigenen Begeisterungsfähigkeit rasch in die neue Materie ein und sorgte fortan – bis zum gegenwärtigen Jahr – dafür, dass das IWM technologisch up to date blieb und rund lief.

Wichtiger noch war, wie er die tagtäglichen technischen Probleme löste, mit denen der Staff und die Visiting Fellows zu ihm kamen, nämlich mit unendlicher Geduld, tschechischem Witz und, wo die Handbücher versagten, einem unerschöpflichen Einfallsreichtum. 1998 baute – und betreute – David die erste Website des Instituts, und bis 2013 drei weitere, um mit der Technologie des Mediums und dem Wachstum des IWM Schritt zu halten.

In den letzten Jahren wandte sich David zunehmend der Geschichte des 1982 gegründeten Instituts zu. Im Laufe von mehr als drei Jahrzehnten hatte sich eine immense Menge von Photographien und Tonaufzeichnungen angesammelt, welche die Aktivitäten des Instituts dokumentieren. David katalogisierte sie in Datenbanken, ebenso erstellte er ein Archiv der seit 1986 erschienenen IWM *Newsletter* (ab 2005 IWM*post*). Diese Bestände bilden einen wichtigen Teil des im Aufbau befindlichen Archivs des Instituts.

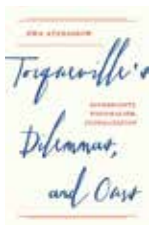
Das IWM ist ein Ort, an dem die verschiedensten Überzeugungen aufeinandertreffen, manchmal auch heftig. Mit seinen hielt sich David immer zurück. Ich glaube, seine mitteleuropäische Lebenserfahrung hat ihn zu einem Konservativen im besten Sinne gemacht – was sich seit ein paar Jahren auch in seinem Äußeren manifestiert: Mit dem sorgfältig gepflegten Backenbart gleicht er zunehmend Kaiser Franz Joseph. Doch man lasse sich nicht täuschen – dahinter verbirgt sich auch ein sanfter Anarchist und ein jung gebliebener Geist mit unbändiger Neugier und Spielfreude.

Nur schwer kann ich mir das IWM ohne David Souček vorstellen. Auch im Namen der Kolleg:innen möchte ich mich bei ihm für seine Treue und die vielen Jahre guter Zusammenarbeit bedanken. ◁

Klaus Nellen ist Mitbegründer und ehemaliger Permanent Fellow des IWM.

Publications by Fellows

Ewa Atanassow
Tocqueville's Dilemmas, and Ours: Sovereignty, Nationalism, Globalization
Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2022, 272 pp., ISBN 9780691191102



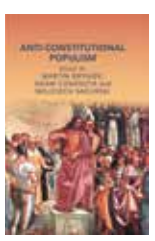
How can today's liberal democracies withstand the illiberal wave sweeping the globe? What can revive our waning faith in constitutional democracy? *Tocqueville's Dilemmas, and Ours* argues that Alexis de Tocqueville, one of democracy's greatest champions and most incisive critics, can guide us forward.

Drawing on Tocqueville's major works and lesser-known policy writings, Ewa Atanassow shines a bright light on the foundations of liberal democracy. She argues that its prospects depend on how we tackle three dilemmas that were as urgent in Tocqueville's day as they are in ours: how to institutionalize popular sovereignty, how to define nationhood, and how to grasp the possibility and limits of global governance. These are pivotal but often neglected dimensions of Tocqueville's work, and this fresh look at his writings provides a powerful framework for addressing the tensions between liberalism and democracy in the twenty-first century. Recovering a richer liberalism capable of weathering today's political storms, *Tocqueville's Dilemmas, and Ours* explains how we can reclaim nationalism as a liberal force and reimagine sovereignty in a global age—and do so with one of democracy's most discerning thinkers as our guide.

Markus Marterbauer und **Martin Schürz**
Angst und Angstmacherei: Für eine Wirtschaftspolitik, die Hoffnung macht
Wien: Paul Zsolnay Verlag, 2022, 384 S., ISBN-10 3552073116, ISBN-13 9783552073111

Wie bezahlen wir die wirtschaftlichen Folgen von Pandemie und Krieg? Markus Marterbauers und Martin Schürz' Plädoyer für einen besseren Sozialstaat. Neoliberale Wirtschaftspolitik betrachtet Angst als mobilisierenden Faktor. Sie schürt Angst vor Altersarmut, sozialem Abstieg und dem bevormundenden Staat. Doch ist es das, was wir angesichts von Pandemie, Krieg und Klimakrise brauchen? Markus Marterbauer und Martin Schürz plädieren für eine Wirtschaftspolitik, die begründeten Ängsten gezielt entgegenwirkt, Verängstigte bestärkt, Hoffnung weckt und Freiheit schafft. In einer Gesellschaft, in der wenige Leute Milliarden besitzen, darf es keine Armut geben, und es darf nicht mit Angstmacherei Politik betrieben werden. Ein Plädoyer für hohe Mindeststandards in einem besseren Sozialstaat, Löhne, von denen man gut leben kann, und eine Begrenzung des Reichtums.

Martin Krygier, Adam Czarnota, Wojciech Sadurski (eds.)
Anti-Constitutional Populism
Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022, 251 pp., ISBN 9781009031103



Around the world, populist parties have sprung up in formerly and formally liberal-democratic polities, challenging their existing political parties and leaders, and frequently overwhelming them. These challenges and successes were rarely predicted, arriving so soon after the wave of liberal democratic and constitutional enthusiasms, proclamations and institution-building which peaked in the 1990s. Bringing together scholars from law, political science and philosophy, this collection explores the character of contemporary populisms and their relationships to constitutional democracy. With contributors from around the world, it offers a diverse range of nuanced perspectives on populism as a global phenomenon. Using comparative and multi-disciplinary techniques, this book considers the specifics and similarities of populisms, and raises general questions about their nature and potential futures.

Martin Bojda und **Holger Gutschmidt** (Hrsg.)
Johann Gottfried Herder: Metakritik zur Kritik der reinen Vernunft
Hamburg: Meiner Verlag für Philosophie, Philosophische Bibliothek 760, 2022, LXXVIII, 338 S., ISBN 9783787342358

Herder, der zeit seines Lebens Kant als Lehrer rühmte, stand dessen „kopernikanischer Wende" mit tiefer Skepsis gegenüber. Herders „Metakritik" erntete in ihrer Zeit nur wenig Aufmerksamkeit und eher verständnislose Kritik. Mehr als andere bedeutende Denker der Geistesgeschichte leidet das Bild Herders bis heute unter zahlreichen Stereotypen. Sein Werk erfreut sich inzwischen aber einer zunehmenden Aufmerksamkeit. Er wird nicht mehr „nur" als Geschichts-, Sprach- oder Kulturphilosoph wahrgenommen, sondern auch als bedeutender Erkenntnistheoretiker und Metaphysiker.