

Stephen M. Walt

Building a Better World Order?

Ivan Krastev / Stephen Holmes

The Coming Age
of Population Wars

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Digital
Governance

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For a New Culture
of Technological Design

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Editorial

Der zentrale Text der vorliegenden Ausgabe reagiert auf ein akutes Problem der Gegenwart. In einer Zeit, in der die Weltordnung, die nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg etabliert wurde, zunehmend bröckelt und in Frage gestellt wird, erläutert der führende Experte in internationalen Beziehungen, **Stephen Walt**, welche Schlüsselemente eine neue bessere Weltordnung enthalten sollte und wie man dahin gelangen könnte.

Der Schwerpunkt der Ausgabe zu Politik enthält weitere drei Beiträge: **Ivan Krastev** und **Stephen Holmes**, stellen in ihrem Aufsatz eine Verbindung zwischen Krieg und Entvölkerung her, **Francesca De Benedetti** warnt vor einer Orbanisierung Europas durch Giorgia Meloni und **Kristina Broučková** entwickelt eine differenzierte Sicht über das Verhältnis von Wahlen und Demokratie.

Vier Beiträge behandeln Fragen der digitalen Technologie und Künstlichen Intelligenz. **Rogers Brubaker** erläutert das Verhältnis zwischen digitaler Technokratie und Populismus, **Viola Schiaffonati** fordert eine kritische Diskussion der Design-Optionen der neuen Technologie, während **Erich Prem** und **Angelika Adensamer** ihrerseits die Grenzen der KI zeigen und vor ihrer unreflektierten Anwendung durch staatliche Behörden warnen.

Die philosophischen Beiträge der Ausgabe behandeln Jan Patočka's Reflexionen über ein posteuropäisches Europa (**James Dodd**), die Problematisierung der Kategorie des Zeugen (**Marek Kettner**) und der Perspektive (**Jakub Čapek**), die Hegelianische Politik des Widerspruchs (**Bartosz Wójcik**) und die Kant-Rezeption in Indien (**Manidipa Sanyal** und **Subhoranjan Dasgupta**).

In einem weiteren Schwerpunkt zu Erinnerung und Geschichte geht **Łukasz Kiełpiński** auf das „Erinnerungsfieber“ im Polen des 20. Jahrhunderts, während **Anna Narinskaya** uns anhand von Familienerinnerungen einen Einblick in das Leben jüdischer Konvertiten in der Sowjetunion bietet. **Ola Hnatiuk** macht auf Forschungsdefizite in der historischen Aufarbeitung der österreichisch-sowjetischen Beziehungen während der ukrainischen Hungerkrise von 1933 aufmerksam und **Michał Narozniak** diskutiert die sexuelle Moderne in Galizien. Die Idee des Westens ist der Gegenstand des ideengeschichtlichen Beitrags von **Georgios Varouxakis**.

Dragan Đunda und **Tendai Ganduri** gehen auf soziologische und politische Implikationen von Infrastrukturprojekten und -fragen ein.

Schließlich möchten wir die IWM-Publikation *Der Balkan: Mission Possible* von **Maria Todorova** ankündigen, die im Frühjahr 2025 im Mandelbaum Verlag erscheinen wird.

Im Namen des IWM wünsche ich Ihnen viel Freude beim Lesen! <

The central text of the present issue responds to an urgent problem of our time. At a historical moment when the world order established after the Second World War is increasingly crumbling and being challenged, international relations expert **Stephen Walt** outlines the key elements of and the path toward a possible better world order.

The focus on politics includes three further essays: **Ivan Krastev** and **Stephen Holmes** link war and the nightmare of depopulation, **Francesca De Benedetti** warns against an Orbanization of Europe by Giorgia Meloni, and **Kristina Broučková** develops a differentiated view of the relationship between elections and democracy.

Four essays deal with questions of digital technology and artificial intelligence. **Rogers Brubaker** explains the relationship between digital technocracy and populism, **Viola Schiaffonati** calls for a critical discussion on the design choices in digital technologies, and **Erich Prem** and **Angelika Adensamer** point to the limits of artificial intelligence and warn against its unreflective application by state authorities.

The philosophical essays of the issue address Jan Patočka's reflections on a post-European world (**James Dodd**), the notions of witness (**Marek Kettner**) and perspective (**Jakub Čapek**), the Hegelian politics of contradiction (**Bartosz Wójcik**), and the reception of Kant in India (**Manidipa Sanyal** and **Subhoranjan Dasgupta**).

In a section on memory and history, **Łukasz Kiełpiński** points to the “memoir fever” in 20th century Poland and **Anna Narinskaya** offers us an insight into the lives of Jewish converts in the Soviet Union through her own family memories. Further, **Ola Hnatiuk** draws attention to research gaps in the study of Austrian-Soviet relations during the Ukrainian Holodomor of 1933, **Michał Narozniak** discusses sexual modernity in Galicia, and **Georgios Varouxakis** traces the origin and development of the idea of the West.

Dragan Đunda and **Tendai Ganduri** address sociological and political implications of infrastructure projects and issues.

Finally, we point to the IWM publication *The Balkans: Mission Possible* by **Maria Todorova**, which is to be released by Mandelbaum Verlag in the spring of 2025.

I hope you enjoy the read! <

Evangelos Karagiannis

Building a Better World Order?

BY STEPHEN M. WALT

When President Joe Biden spoke to UN General Assembly in September 2024, he said the world was at an “inflection point.” This was an admission that the current order is showing unmistakable signs of strain. With wars and mass killings occurring around the world, protectionism and populism rising, democracy fraying, and relations among the strongest states deteriorating, the need for a better world order is obvious. What is less clear is what its key elements would be or how we might go about creating one.



Photo: Andrew F. Kazmierki / Shutterstock.com

Most definitions of “world order” describe it as a set of rules or institutions that establish who the principal actors are and that help manage their interactions. According to Hedley Bull, an order is “a group of states... that conceive themselves to be bound by a set of common rules in their relations with one another.” For John Mearsheimer, an order is “an organized group of international institutions that help govern the interactions among the member states.” He adds that institutions “are effectively rules that the great powers devise and agree to follow because they believe that obeying those rules is in their interests.” Similarly, Henry Kissinger argues that world orders rest on “a set of commonly accepted rules that define the limits of permissible action.”

Political orders invariably reflect an underlying balance of power. The strongest actors set and enforce the rules, and the weaker actors must for the most part accept them, even if they push back on occasion. Although others may benefit from the stability and predictability that institution and norms provide, powerful actors invariably favor rules that advance their own interests. It

follows that orders will evolve as the balance of power shifts, but this process does not happen overnight and is often contentious. For example, the list of permanent, veto-holding members of the UN Security Council hardly reflects the current realities of world politics but it persists because there is no consensus on how to change it. Given the “stickiness” of many global institutions, it is not surprising that order-creating moments tend to occur after major wars, when the prior order has broken down and a new hierarchy of power has been established.

Orders also reflect what John Ruggie called “social purpose”: the goals that the actors are trying to achieve and the broader notions of right and wrong to which they subscribe. For example, modern states do not just provide security or serve a monarch’s whims—they are also expected to provide their citizens with many other benefits and they will favor a global order that will help them do so.

The major powers can ignore or amend their own rules when necessary but doing so is not cost-free. States that repeatedly violate existing norms will be seen by others as untrustworthy and even dangerous,

and they are likely to face growing opposition. Repeated violations also undermine the legitimacy of the rules, which encourages others to ignore them as well. The United States’ willingness to violate important norms while insisting that others obey them is one of the main reasons the present order has lost legitimacy, especially in the Global South. But the problem is much bigger than that.

Why Is Today’s Order Collapsing?

Today’s order is under severe strain for several interrelated reasons. First, the global balance of power has shifted dramatically. Asia’s share of the world economy has soared; Europe’s has declined sharply; that of the United States remains roughly the same; and Russia has recovered from the economic morass of the 1990s. Countries like Brazil, India, and South Africa are more significant global players, and China is now a clear peer competitor to the United States. An order based on the distribution of power in 1945 or 1992 was not going to endure once that underlying foundation was gone.

Second, humanity as whole faces an unprecedented challenge from

climate change. Today’s global institutions have yet to devise adequate solutions to the problem, and the consequences are going to reshape politics within and between states for years to come.

A third challenge is migration. Millions of people are fleeing violence, moving to escape the effects of climate change, or seeking greater economic opportunities, and modern means of transportation make it easier for them to do so, but every state wants to control who can enter their territory. This problem will get worse as more young people from the Global South seek to move to the wealthy, aging, and depopulating Global North, and there is no international consensus on how to manage this issue.

A fourth factor is science and technology. We are witnessing an explosion of potentially revolutionary advances in many areas, including biology, energy production, artificial intelligence (AI), and medicine. The impact of the internet and social media has been more profound and troubling than many expected, and the same will be true for AI, which is already affecting warfare, labor markets, education, and public opinion. Technological revolutions

always leave their mark on politics, and there is no agreement on how to regulate these technologies or to manage their consequences.

Finally, the norms and rules that shaped the order of the past 75 years, however imperfectly, are unraveling before our eyes. A broad commitment to economic integration is giving way to protectionism. The United States’ invasion of Iraq, Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, and Israel’s annexation of the Golan Heights and de facto incorporation of the West Bank have weakened norms prohibiting preventive war and conquest. Targeted killings by governments have eroded the norm against international assassination. Genocides and mass killings are occurring with growing frequency, and major powers have turned a blind eye to these events or actively supported them. Ideologies once thought to be discredited, such as Nazism, are back. In the United States and some other countries, politicians become more popular when they do and say reprehensible things that would have ended their careers instantly in the past.

These different developments reinforce each other, and existing institutions cannot address all of

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Giorgia Meloni Is Orbánizing the EU

BY FRANCESCA DE BENEDETTI

Viktor Orbán influenced Giorgia Meloni's tactics, and his Fidesz and her Fratelli d'Italia have close connections and a common purpose, but Hungary's prime minister can only dream about the influence she has gained in European politics. Italy's far-right leader is Orbánizing not just her country but also the EU.

Given the illiberal playbook he used and exported, Viktor Orbán is considered to be the black sheep of the EU. Hungary's prime minister even promotes himself as an icon of the global populist right. But what about Giorgia Meloni? In addition to also causing an illiberal drift in her country, Italy's prime minister seems more capable of penetrating the mainstream. As well as adopting Orbán's tactics, she has her own, more insidious strategy.

"The politics of smiles and good manners on the international stage are successful propaganda that wins over even experts." For Nadia Urbinati, an Italian political scientist at Columbia University, it is hard to get international audiences to understand the true face of Meloni. There is a historical parallel, she argues: "In the 1930s, the antifascist intellectual and politician Gaetano Salvemini struggled to convince British and American professors and journalists that there was a dictatorship in Italy. Today a similar fate befalls us: there is a risk of an authoritarian turn. We struggle to make that clear to foreign observers who think and write that Giorgia Meloni has moderated the far right."

Though Meloni presents herself as a "pragmatic and moderate leader," the erosion of the rule of law in Italy shows how Orbán's illiberal playbook is applied to other EU countries. The "Orbánization" of Italy under its far-right prime minister has become a common refrain in public debate. To keep a monopolistic control of political processes, Meloni has blurred the distinction between her government, her party, and her family. After coming to power, she named her sister Arianna as the head of the Fratelli d'Italia secretariat, with the particular role of managing the membership department.

Meloni also pushed for the "premierato" reform, which would have prioritized the executive over the legislature and handed the prime minister's coalition a guaranteed majority of seats in it. Repression of dissent, attacks against independent journalists, the political capture of the public broadcaster, the identity crusade against the LGBTQIA+ community, and the propaganda on immigration are just some of the elements showing the influence of Orbán on Meloni.

Meloni's entourage frequents pro-government think tanks and foundations in Budapest—such as



Giorgia Meloni at the Special European Council, Brussels, April 18, 2024.

the Danube Institute, the Mathias Corvinus Collegium, and the Center for Fundamental Rights—that are a key point of intersection for the European and American far right. Orbán's henchmen similarly often take the stage in Rome, which is home to new conservative think tanks that are networked with counterparts in Hungary.

Nazione Futura, whose president, Francesco Giubilei, played a key role as Meloni's government adviser, has even launched a pan-European network. He has been a fellow at Mathias Corvinus Collegium, whose chairman of the board of trustees is Balázs Orbán, the political director for Hungary's prime minister. In 2023, Giubilei's publisher, Historica edizioni, published *La sfida ungherese. Una strategia vincente per l'Europa*, the Italian version of Balázs Orbán's *The Hungarian Way of Strategy*. This is only one example of a dense web of connections and mutual exchanges.

This cooperation is shaping a shared playbook and Fratelli d'Italia has adopted the same watchwords and scapegoats as Fidesz. Meloni

emulates Orbán's anti-LGBTQIA+ rhetoric and "crusades" for "demographic renewal," and she shares his belief in the supremacy of national law over EU "impositions." Since coming to power, she has eroded the rule of law by targeting the judicial system. As Fidesz did, Italy's governing party is attacking independent media. Meloni has gone even further by verbally, violently, and explicitly attacking intellectuals, journalists, newspapers, and the judiciary. Students were charged by the police while demonstrating peacefully.

After the war in Ukraine began, and with the prospect of becoming prime minister, Meloni put aside the pictures with her ally in Budapest. Her priority was to show her alignment with Washington and to make public opinion forget that she is a post-fascist leader. But the close contacts never stopped: far from it.

In September 2022, a few days after Fratelli d'Italia's electoral triumph, think tanks linked to Meloni gathered the far-right galaxy in Rome's Hotel Quirinale. Orbán loyalists took the stage with Raffaele Fitto, Meloni's key figure in Eu-

rope, and with Lorenzo Fontana, the president of the lower house of parliament from the Lega party, who is in close contact with Fidesz circles. Balázs Orbán attacked EU sanctions against Russia. In September 2023, Meloni travelled to Hungary to attend the Budapest Demographic Summit—and more importantly, to meet Orbán.

As the president of the European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR) party, Meloni has presented herself a pragmatic leader who is able to talk to anyone, and as the "bridge" between the EU establishment and the untamed far right (including Orbán).

In 2021, before becoming prime minister, Meloni boycotted attempts to form a Europe-wide far-right alliance, as proposed by Orbán, Matteo Salvini, and Marine Le Pen. Sabotaging this project served her interests in two ways. It helped to negotiate a tactical alliance with the conservative European People's Party (EPP), the dominant right-wing force in the EU, and to secure her leadership of her part of the political spectrum. January 2022 saw the first manifes-

tation of this alliance with the election of the EPP's Roberta Metsola as the president of the European Parliament and the ECR getting one of the vice president positions.

Most importantly, the ECR-EPP alliance broke the cordon sanitaire against the far right and opened the door to deals with it. Following subsequent elections in Finland and Sweden, EPP-led governments have been in office with the support of far-right parties.

After becoming prime minister, Meloni first downplayed her relations with Orbán and Fidesz to gain credibility while positioning herself and her party as the key player at the intersection of Europe's right and far-right forces. Now that Fratelli d'Italia has penetrated the European conservative establishment, Meloni is making room for her long-standing illiberal teammates. More than neutralizing Orbán, Italy's far-right leader is Orbánizing her country and the EU. <

Francesca De Benedetti is senior editor at the Italian daily *Domeni*, where she covers European politics. She was a Milena Jesenská Fellow at the IWM in 2024.

The Coming Age of Population Wars

BY IVAN KRASTEV AND STEPHEN HOLMES

Russia's population decline is a nightmare for Vladimir Putin. Is the war in Ukraine related to it?

We live in a strange time, “an era of pervasive and indefinite de-population.” The world is infected with childlessness. In 2015, fertility rate globally is half what it was in 1965. Most of the people in the world live in societies where fertility is below replacement level. And, as the economist Nicholas Eberstadt wrote, “Human beings have no collective memory of depopulation.” The last instance of large-scale depopulation, the bubonic plague that decimated Eurasia, happened 700 years ago. But this time it is not some cruel disease that threatens the future of humanity but the cultural choices of individuals. It looks as if humans suddenly lost the desire to reproduce. Rapid depopulation looks like a catastrophe wrapped in mystery. It is not easy to explain why fertility is declining and population is shrinking simultaneously in rich and poor states, in secular and religious societies, in democracies and autocracies.

In his book *The Tragic Mind*, the geopolitical thinker Robert Kaplan asserts that “while an understanding of world events begins with maps, it ends with Shakespeare.” But could it be that an understanding of the world today starts with demographic charts? Do alarming demographic trends, real and imagined, explain one of the secret reasons why President Vladimir Putin started the war in Ukraine and why and how President Volodymyr Zelensky would decide to end it?

Reversing Russia's negative demographic trends has been a top priority for Putin from the first day he entered Kremlin. Since the end of the Soviet Union, Russia has lost 17 million people. It also is the country in the world with the most striking gender gap in mortality. In 2021, Russian women tended to live almost 12 years more than Russian men. We should consider whether Putin's decision to invade Ukraine was an admission of the failure of his pro-natalist policies. As Eberstadt remarked, “The most successful population program that the Kremlin has had has been annexing neighboring territories, not increasing the birthrate.”¹ By illegally incorporating Crimea into Russia in 2014, Putin added around 2.4 million ethnic Russians to his country's population.

Conceiving demographic decline as a threat akin to total war and attributing population loss to the West's



Rescuers and volunteers clean up the rubble and search victims after a Russian missile attack in Kyiv, July 8, 2024.

cultural subversion policies are the two defining features of Putin's political thinking. Understood in this context, Russia's war in Ukraine is an especially brutal version of what is sometimes called “extinction rebellion.” Like radical environmental activists who glue themselves to the sidewalk, Russia's leader has embraced shockingly disruptive tactics to stave off what he sees as the ultimate catastrophe: the sweeping away of his people and their culture.

The Soviet Union had a positive project for the future; today, by contrast, there is nothing utopian about the Kremlin's vision of the future—it is entirely dominated by fear. Demographic data and forecasts are the main drivers of Putin's attempt to arrest the perceived downward spiral of Russia's demographic fate by depriving Ukrainians of any home but Russia.

We can only imagine how Putin felt when standing in front of the UN's estimates according to which Russia's population will have shrunk to between 74 million and 112 million in 2100, an astonishing drop from the current 145 million.

Demographic imagination has replaced ideological imagination. Demographic imagination offers a very different version of the 21st-century society we know now. It breeds fear rather than hope. And while demographic projections are often wrong, they shape expectations. In the world

of tomorrow, Russia will be a territorial giant and population dwarf. That is what Putin understands. Russia's population will not only be much smaller than that of China, India, or the United States but also half that of Brazil and Ethiopia and one-third that of Nigeria and Pakistan. For someone like Putin, who sees population size primarily in security terms, demographic decline means an irreversible loss of power. As he stated in 2020, “Russia's destiny and its historic prospects depend on how numerous we will be.”

If the imperialist wars of yesterday were motivated by Malthusian fears that growing populations would lack adequate natural resources, and if European empires were mesmerized by Ukraine's black earth as the “breadbasket of Europe,” Putin's new imperialistic war is fueled by his worries that Russia contains too few people to take advantage, for example, of the new opportunities for mineral exploration and extraction in the Arctic region due to thawing of the permafrost. The land wars of the 20th century have been succeeded by the population wars of the 21st century.

It is emblematic that the war in Ukraine has involved the large-scale abduction of children, particularly of orphans, who have been transported to Russia and adopted by Russian parents, based on rushed-through legislation. These newly minted Russians were central to the way Putin

defined the objectives of his “special military operation.” Ukrainians were to be treated as a “reserve army” of future Russians destined to increase not simply Russia's population but also to reverse the expected decline of the Slavic majority inside the country, keeping in mind that any future immigration will mostly come from non-Russian neighbors that once were part of the former Soviet Union and that some of the country's minority groups have higher birthrates than ethnic Russians do.

We should understand Putin's decision to invade Ukraine not only as an effort to reverse Russia's population decline but also as his way of combating what he sees as a Western conspiracy to make Russia “childless.”

The Kremlin, in a similar fashion to its right-wing allies around the world, prefers to portray low birth rates as a consequence of Western feminism and LGBTQ-friendly policies that are purportedly designed to reduce the Russian population. In the Kremlin's political imagination, Western civilization is in unstoppable decline, having lost its energy and vitality, and Europe has started to look like old people's nursing home managed by migrants. And therefore the West wants to transform younger and more energetic civilizations by arresting their demographic potential so as to preserve its power. Putin and his elites

blame a brazenly self-important West, especially the United States, for foisting a liberal cultural and political model on Russia's “historically distinctive civilization.”

Unlike some of his political allies in the West, Putin has never quoted the French philosopher René Girard, but he would agree with him that the world is threatened by apocalyptic mimetism. Russian women do not want children, not because they mistrust the Russian state or because they look for different personal realization but because they imitated the choices of the West. In such a view, it is only by breaking the mimetic circuit that Russia can survive.

Russia's demographic decline, viewed from this perspective, is not a natural process but the result of the West's war against the country, with the new gender norms advocated by the West deployed as weapons of cultural extermination. It is telling in this regard that other authoritarian

regimes, too, have claimed that decadent Western influences are responsible for the decline of the population in their countries. For example, religious authorities in Iran commonly blame “Westoxification” for the lifestyle changes that have drastically reduced the country's birth rate.²

In the 17th and 18th century, some native nations in North America waged “mourning wars”: wars of grief and population replacement, not fought for territory or glory. They conducted raids and kidnapped men and women partly to compensate for the loss of their own people in wars. Those kidnapped who refused to integrate were killed. If these wars were genocidal, they were example of genocidal inclusion.

How different is Putin's war in Ukraine? Is it not a 21st-century version of the mourning wars? <

1) Betsy McKay and Georgi Kantchev, “Putin's Existential Problem: Not Enough Russians,” *Wall Street Journal* (June 6, 2024).
2) Bitia Ghaffari, “Iran's urban youth falling out of love with marriage,” *Financial Times* (September 6, 2024).

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“The Siren of Democracy”

BY KRISTINA BROUČKOVÁ

The affinity between democracy, representation, and elections has always appeared more fragile rather than firm. The alliance of representation and democracy has been questioned, and the place of elections in democracy and their ability to represent have not been self-explanatory. More distant events as well as recent ones surrounding elections encourage a debate on the topic.

Over the last decades, representative democracy has been scrutinized by scholars and questioned by citizens. Citizens have been expressing their discontent with the performance of representatives and representative institutions, and decreasing voter turnout is considered by scholars one of the symptoms of the crisis, or at least transformation, of democracy.

Bernard Manin’s provocative question in *The Principles of Representative Government*—“Why do not we practice lot, and nonetheless call ourselves democrats?”—reminds us that the presence of elections did not always define democracy.¹

The ancient Greeks, and later some Italian republics in the Renaissance era, introduced sortition—filling offices and organs based on a random selection of citizens by lot. Together with the Popular Assembly (ecclesia), sortition was one of the defining attributes of Athenian democracy. However, when modern democracy was established by the end of the 18th century, the restoration of the sortition was never seriously considered, and elections were generally agreed upon as the way forward. Nevertheless, after the fight for universal suffrage throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, elections appeared to lose the allure they once possessed in the eyes of many people, and that initially made them part and parcel of representative democracy. The slogan of the 2010s protest—“We have a vote, but we do not have a voice”—encapsulates the sentiments of disenchantment. Some of the criticism directed at elections pointed toward the loss of the ability to represent the citizens and their interests. Pierre Rosanvallon, who analyzed the declining representative function of elections, has argued that, since contemporary societies have lost an evident class character and become more complex and opaque, electoral results can no longer represent this intricacy.² While the observation about the character of contemporary societies can hardly be disputed, before ruling out the ability of elections to represent them, we should inquire what representation is and, more importantly, what it means to democracy.

The “uneasy alliance,” as Hanna Pitkin famously put it, between representation and democracy has attracted scholars’ attention for a long time.³ However, political thinkers have always been suspicious about their troubling relationship. In the 1970s and 1980s, advocates of participatory democracy struggled to acknowledge any value in represen-



Photo: Rama / commons.wikimedia.org

tation in democracy. Their concerns were seemingly vindicated, mainly in the 2010s, when citizens manifested profound discontent with how democracy worked, or rather how it did not work, and accused representative institutions of being an accomplice in this. Some scholars even declared “the end of representative politics.” Since the late 1990s, however, scholarship has emerged that takes a radically different stance on representation and its place in democracy. Proponents of the “representative turn” have suggested that democracy is, and in fact should be, unthinkable without representation. Democratic theorists like Nadia Urbinati disputed the idea of representative democracy as a second-best option enforced by the size of modern societies and promoted it as a desirable form of government that is more inclusive than participatory and direct democracy could ever be. This turn resulted in even more intense interest in representation as a concept that needed a thorough rethinking.

For a long time, representation was perceived through the lens of a principal-agent model. In it, constituencies delegated someone to represent their political interests. Representatives then acted in the interest of their respective constituency, which granted them a mandate to do so and held them accountable. One part of the scholarship made a constructivist turn out of this static outlook on representation by asking not only what representation is but what it does. In this vein, schol-

ars have emphasized representation’s previously overlooked constitutive character. This broadened the horizon from the fact of representation to the dynamic process of representing, and thereby constituting, the constituency. This can be described by what Michael Saward, an eminent figure of the constructivist turn, calls claim-making.⁴ According to him, for representation to occur, someone has to paint a picture of a constituency and propose someone (who can be themselves) or something as its representative, and subject this claim to the judgment of an audience. Another leading scholar of the constructivist turn, Lisa Disch, suggests thinking of representation in terms of mobilization as it does not merely reflect divisions set in stone in society but helps to create them.⁵ The constructivist turn has, therefore, also shifted attention to political actors, who indulge in representative claim-making without striving for institutional mandate. It sparked an interest in non-electoral representation in the forms of non-governmental organizations, protest or civic movements, and public figures who enter politics claiming to represent a constituency but without the urge to turn this constituency into an electorate and be authorized by it.

While this shift reminds us that representation is not limited to elections, it does not exclude them as a powerful vessel and a critical aspect of the representative process. Regularly held elections allow new divisions to be drawn, new identities and

interests to be shaped, new constituencies to be mobilized, and new representatives to be authorized. Each election presents an opportunity to rewrite political and social terrain. As Adam Przeworski has remarked, “Elections are the siren of democracy: Whatever the past, regardless of how disgusted or jaded people are with politics, elections invariably renew hope.”⁶

By the end of 2024, at least 73 national elections will have been held all around the world. However, it seems that elections now evoke anxiety instead of hope as we witness how they can pave the way for leaders who do not recoil from evincing autocratic tendencies. Before the recent US presidential election, the world seemed more anxious than ever, fearing what immediate and long-term aftermath it may result in, regardless of the actual electoral result. The aftermath of the 2020 US presidential election tainted the outlook on what was perceived, despite all its shortcomings, as one of the longest-standing democracies in the world. An attempt, for a few hours successful, to take over the Capitol in defiance of the electoral result shook and puzzled many people who could watch it online in real-time. While elections do not guarantee nonviolence in every part of the world—failings of electoral design in societies with deeply rooted cleavages are testament to this—one would probably least expect violence to erupt in the heart of the American democracy.

This experience may caution us about the importance of representa-

tion in democracy, namely its constitutive dimension. How and what kind of constituency does the would-be representative paint, and on what grounds do they justify their claims? When judging representative claims, political theorist Sofia Näsström proposes asking in what spirit are they made. Is it in the spirit of emancipation? Or is it to promote the spirit of fear or distinction?⁷ At the same time, the American experience alerts us to the importance of elections. While representation deserves to be studied outside the electoral framework, we should also keep delving into a nuanced debate about the role of elections in democracy since the impacts of elections on societies in various aspects remain tangible. And as it appears, elections may, under different circumstances, work for or against democracy. ◀

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After Europe

BY JAMES DODD

Jan Patočka's reflections on a post-European world remain an important resource for understanding the situation of contemporary humanity, which faces increasingly intractable problems on a global scale.

It is perhaps a truism that the larger questions of political life rarely yield conclusive answers. At most such questions are partially resolved, or settle into forms of varying urgency, tenacity, and relevance. Sometimes they renew themselves in strikingly different configurations, usually in response to the exigencies of a particular historical moment. This capacity for renewal is arguably characteristic of the political question of "Europe," and one might propose tracing the history of Europe through the various permutations of its formulation, including during those long periods in which it failed to establish traction at all. Such an exercise would take us through some of the darkest but also most hopeful turns in this complex history. It would also naturally gravitate toward moments of transformation, when Europe seemed to be on the way from an old version of itself to something new, though without ever really breaking free from its past. In the wake of 1989, the prospect of a reunited Europe renewed but also reconfigured the question of Europe that had taken shape during its division post-1945, just as the revolutions of 1848 took up and transformed the idea of Europe that had emerged out of the French Revolution of 1789 and the Napoleonic Wars. The idea of Europe resurfaces again and again, or fades into the background, but it is never quite the same, nor does it ever prove to be a permanent acquisition. It is, to echo Jacques Derrida, always something *à venir*.

This protean character of the question of Europe is also evident when we survey the attempts at its philosophical formulation that, at least since the 18th century, have often accompanied the political discourse on things Europe. The recent publication of *Europa und Nach-Europa*, a selection of writings on the question of Europe by the Czech philosopher Jan Patočka, edited by Ludger Hagedorn and Klaus Nellen, arguably marks an important chapter in such a survey. Reflecting on Patočka's reflections on Europe can perhaps orient how one might formulate the question today, philosophically and even politically.

Patočka's discourse takes as its point of departure the recognition that the global preeminence of Europe has come to an end, an assessment that was still fresh in the post-war years in which he was writing. What is coming is not another Europe, but what comes after Europe. Politically, this involves, among other things, understanding the constellation of a global humanity no longer dominated by Europe, but still shaped by the myriad legacies of colonial-

ism, technoscience, and capitalism that come after. Philosophically, the task is more ambiguous, for it inevitably leads to the question of the universal. Whether it takes the form of a simple identification, a promise, a hope, or an appeal, in some way or other the idea of the universal is almost without exception implicated in the idea of Europe.

There has always been something paradoxical about this implication of

ed a truth that is of lasting importance: the awareness that thinking always takes place in a situation, even a thinking that strives for the universal. Particularity is not something we can avoid. The importance of the universal, in turn, is rooted in an awareness that the question of who we are cannot be formulated within the limits of a closed situation but must relate to what opens our situation onto the possible. This is a key

All these attitudes are for Patočka co-original, and they come together in the figure of responsibility. They pre-date Europe proper, intertwine throughout its history in a serious of complex configurations, and remain contested ground in the wake of its collapse.

Another salient feature of Patočka's reflections is that this trifecta of philosophy, politics, and history is not assumed to be a fixed constellation.

al of the conception of a universal humanity. It is a real question because of the distinctive danger that Patočka sees in the marriage of technology and science that he takes to be characteristic of the contemporary world. Technoscience buries the last vestiges of the ancient commitment to insight in favor of the capacity to predict, inaugurating the ascetic nihilism of a purely instrumental rationality. Europe as techno-civilization has become a global *instrumentarium* for the pursuit and management of power for its own sake. There is at times a palpable sense in Patočka's writings that, whatever the future may be for the care for the soul, it will draw from a vitality that comes from elsewhere than Europe, which has all but been reduced to a hollow colossus of power that no longer carries any genuine promise of meaning.

The last lines in the texts assembled in *Europa und Nach-Europa* were penned almost a half-century ago. Many of the philosophical and political questions Patočka asks remain alive but the global post-European civilization he hoped for shows no signs of becoming a reality. At most we might point to a heightened sense of a shared situation, but even that has limits, as the growing tragedy of the climate disaster is showing us. Maybe the very figure of civilization is misleading, since it directs our gaze away from the irreducible plurality of humanity. "There is no civilization as such," Patočka writes in the *Heretical Essays*, "the question is whether historical humans are still willing to embrace history." Perhaps this should be the opening premise of any reflection on Patočka's reflections on what comes after Europe, and the place of philosophy within it: the urgent need to embrace our common future as a collective task. <



Jan Patočka 1971.

Photo: Archiv Jana Patočky / Jindřich Pfohl / commons.wikimedia.org

the universal in Europe. Universality, if it is to be more than an empty gesture, must be irreducible to particularity, including the contingent self-understanding of a group of peoples who live on a "*petit cap du continent asiatique*," to borrow an apt expression from Paul Valéry. Thus the ambiguity of the implication: what is special about Europe is that it cannot be special. The ambiguity has consequences: it supports the pernicious identification of being human with being European and obfuscates the claims of universality by allowing them to get caught up in the nets of a European exceptionalism that would seek to bend the arc of the universal back into its continentality. It is difficult to avoid the feeling that decoupling the two would be better for both.

Something shifts, however, when the question is no longer about Europe but about what comes after Europe. For the claims of European universality have always distort-

theme in Patočka's writings: what is at stake in the situation in which we find ourselves is the openness that human beings are, or how we are to engage our collective life as a life in possibilities.

There are several aspects of Patočka's approach to the question of Europe and what comes after that merit emphasis. The first is his keen interest in how philosophy emerges and establishes itself in the world as a way of life, even a form of civilization. The Europe Patočka is interested in is the one that he takes to be animated by a spirit he associates with the Platonic motif of the "care for the soul." The care for the soul can be understood as the concert of three spiritual attitudes that inaugurate a distinctive human posture: a drive to question that forms the impetus of philosophy, an embrace of risk that forms the core of political life, and a relation to an open, indeterminate future that characterizes a specifically historical consciousness.

Patočka's emphasis is instead on the contingencies that give unexpected urgency to our questions, throwing us back on our responsibility instead of conforming to any logic of events that we imagine to be at work in the world. The history of the care for the soul is thus composed of a series of renewals formulated in the wake of a sequence of failures: the collapse of the polis, the fall of Rome, the waning of the medieval world, the catastrophe of the wars of the 20th century. The question of post-Europe is, accordingly, whether the death of Europe in the 20th century brings this history to an end, closing off any question of the possibility of a new configuration of philosophy, politics, and history, or whether something like a global emergence of a universal civilization is possible, one that would no longer be European but distinctively human.

This question for Patočka is a real one, and not a mere rhetorical introduction to another rehears-



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Who Is a Witness?

BY MAREK KETTNER

“What the historians say about the period of normalization is of course true. But I don’t remember it that way.” These words of a Czech philosopher express the reason why philosophy in the 20th century gave much attention to the problem of the witness. Derrida, Lyotard, Didi-Huberman, Šmíd. Classic analyses of the witness. But a hidden gem hides elsewhere: in the encounter of Deleuze with Bacon.



Francis Bacon, *Two figures lying on a bed with attendants* (1968), Museum of Contemporary Art, Tehran.

It might seem surprising with regard to the situation of a philosopher writing about a painter, but the conception of a witness that Gilles Deleuze draws from Francis Bacon’s paintings describes anything but an eyewitness. Witnessing has nothing to do with sight and the visible realm. It is all about sensation, about the *Logic of Sensation*, as the title of Deleuze’s book about Bacon reads.

What parts of the past can historians grasp and represent in the form of knowledge? Events, processes, transformations, transgressions, transmutations of politics, transitions of ideas, transfigurations of landscapes, transparencies of texts. Sure. But does the reader of a historiographical book understand anything about sensations? Who knows? However, sensations constitute an indispensable element of the past, and every understanding of the past that omits them fails to fulfil its mission.

Understanding sensations is a matter of witnessing. The witness witnesses a sensation and feels a gap between his or her memory of the past and the information provided about it by historiography. For historiography tries to provide a clear and precise view of history, whereas sensation is a matter not of sight but of the body. It cannot be viewed; it can only be experienced.

But speaking of the body goes a little too far in the context of Deleuze talking about Bacon. The body, as an organism, plays only a secondary role

here. It is the flesh that comes first, as the bearer of sensations. And the witness matters as somebody who experienced a certain event and is standing in the flesh before those to whom he or she is presenting his or her witness account.

Numerous thinkers have stated that the important part of a witness account is not the actual content of the words spoken but the expressive element of the presentation of the account. The pauses, tone of voice, specific articulation. Something irreducible to information, something expressing the emotions experienced by the witness, as Georges Didi-Huberman would say. But there is another expressive and more primordial component of the act of witnessing.

When it comes to major historic events of the 20th century, almost all witnesses seemed to agree with regard to the fact that what they were trying to give an account of was unimaginable and unsayable. That is why they had to come up with specific poetics, according to Jacques Derrida, in order to express the unsayable by a poetic detour. Since they could not name directly what they witnessed, they had to wrap it up in a poetic envelope and address it as a letter to the listener, so to say.

Nevertheless, the informative and the poetic contents of the witness account alike are secondary to the presence of the witness in flesh. In the context of Deleuze and Bacon, what matters most is the presence of the flesh of the witness while

giving the witness account. The flesh expresses sensations that the tone of voice or rhythm of oral presentation cannot attain. We can thus ask the question of whether the primary act of the witness is giving a witness account or appearing in the flesh before other embodied, “meaty” living beings.

In such a case, history, as far as it concerns sensations of its actors, would be an utmost fragile thing, dependent on living perishable flesh. In addition, it would be transmitted thanks to a specific form of communication between bodies. Maybe even the subtlest touch would be too harsh to become a vessel for it.

As many other painters, Bacon was interested in making the invisible visible. His objects were forces and sensations, and bodies their witnesses. His figures were sensing bodies affected by forces. Contracted, contorted, convoluted, conspicuous, concave, conflux, conditioned. According to Deleuze, Bacon felt the need to incorporate a witness in most of his paintings. Why? Because for a person interested in sensations, every living body is primarily a witness.

Let us take two examples: Bacon’s triptych *Two figures lying on a bed with attendants* from 1968 and his *Triptych* from 1970. They are similar in that they seem to represent the “action” in the middle panel and position the witnesses to the left and right panels. In both works, one witness is naked and the other clothed. Both present the “actor”: in

the first case two figures on a bed, in the second case a figure contorted and convoluted by what Bacon called a diagram. The witnesses seem to be looking at the scene in bed and at the convulsion.

According to Deleuze, Bacon’s triptychs are anything but expressions of a certain story (or history) or event that is viewed by more or less involved bystanders. The incorporation of three panels is not intended to tell a story. In this regard, Bacon’s use of the triptych resembles Walter Benjamin or Aby Warburg’s use of montage, which also does not strive to present history in a narrative form but to break with the dominant historiographical tendency of their time, the tendency of linking chronologically and causally related events in the form of a representation of history.

Benjamin and Warburg were concerned with the presentation or *Darstellung* of history. The word *Darstellung* was intended by them precisely to express the fact of making the invisible visible. Bacon’s triptychs can be viewed from this standpoint as a *Darstellung* of the event of witnessing.

The act of witnessing does not concern the visible and is itself not visible. The visible witnesses on Bacon’s triptychs are uncovered by Deleuze as non-witnesses on a deeper level. In fact, they represent an active and passive component of the triptych, while the third one, the witness, is presented on the middle panel. The two bystanders are

witnesses of a visible event but, in fact, the true witness, the witness of invisible sensation, is the figure in the middle.

The witness is somebody who is being looked at rather than somebody who is looking. It is telling that in Deleuze’s conception looking is active: it acts upon the witness, maybe even producing a sensation in him or her. The witness is one who senses the event of being looked at, while the person that sees the event of a witness sensing his or her stare is an active actor.

An example of this reversal of roles can be Bacon’s triptych *Crucifixion* from 1965. In its three images, there is no clear eyewitness, while all the bodies are contorted or convoluted (except of two utmost disconcerting men in hats in the background, forming something resembling a tribunal).

The witness is not the crucified figure, Deleuze says. It is an extremely contracted figure with a Nazi band around its sleeve. Deleuze gives his own explanation of the fact, but from our standpoint a hypothesis could be made that the executioner is sensing the look of his victim being pointed at him before its last moment. The flesh senses the force: witness. <

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Perspectivism in the Post-Truth Era

BY JAKUB ČAPEK

Can an expedition into the history of perspective, through the history of painting and the history of thought, inspire us to address the contemporary problems of societies deeply divided by conflicting perspectives? Reflections on the recent book by Emmanuel Alloa.

Pointing out that something is a matter of perspective often serves as a justification for why there will be different views on the same thing. The term “perspective,” originally denoting the painterly representation of space in a surface, has enjoyed a distinguished philosophical career, dating back to Friedrich Nietzsche, who stated in *The Gay Science*: “We cannot look around our corner: it is a hopeless curiosity to want to know what other kinds of intellects and perspectives there *might* be.” This has often been taken as evidence of Nietzsche’s skepticism and ethical relativism. Nevertheless, his reasoning goes on, “today we are at least far away from the ridiculous immodesty of decreeing from our angle that perspectives are permitted only from this angle.” This does not seem like skepticism or relativism but a call for humility and an acknowledgement of the difference of other perspectives. As the reception Nietzsche got shows, what is important is not so much whether or not we are “perspectivists” but what exactly we understand by perspective.

Misunderstanding Perspective

In *The Share of Perspective* (Routledge 2024), Emmanuel Alloa argues that today we misunderstand what perspective is in two ways. The term “post-truth,” chosen by Oxford Dictionaries as the word of 2016, is symptomatic of the first one. Denying climate change, rejecting the theory of evolution, or distrusting the efficacy of vaccination is then a matter of perspective. This is the way Alloa reads the term “alternative facts,” used in 2017 by Donald Trump’s adviser, Kellyanne Conway, in relation to the number of participants at the presidential inauguration. In Alloa’s interpretation, the term invokes “the heritage of pluralism and the idea that a multiplicity of perspectives must be taken into account.”

It is tempting to refute such claims by pointing to verified data. Does that mean, asks Alloa, that we should return to factualism and “get rid of the perspectivist error”? This is the second misunderstanding: the idea that truth is to be found beyond any perspective by reference to “brute facts.” For Alloa, this idea has two flaws. First, even if we state as a fact that, say, Rembrandt was born in 1606, it makes sense in a society that uses one calendar, agrees on one meaning of “to be born,” and holds this fact for some reason to be



Albrecht Dürer, *Draughtsman Making a Perspective Drawing of a Reclining Woman*, print (MET, 17.37.314).

of value. There is a complex framework or perspective behind the interest in such a fact. Second, the defense of brute factuality “reduces intellectual labor to a purely reactive struggle” and “amounts to a call for the death of all critical thought.”

History of Perspective

Alloa wrote his book as a “defense of perspectivism in the age of post-truth.” He argues that perspective allows not only for division but also for sharing. Delving first into the history of the concept, Alloa states that perspective is a medium. “Perspectiva is a Latin word that means seeing through,” said Albrecht Dürer at the beginning of the 16th century, referring to the grid used by painters. Perspective is an organizing principle imposed on what we see. One could choose a different perspective than the linear one. And yet, we never perceive without any perspective. The extension of the vocabulary of perspective beyond painting is documented by cases as diverse as the way the subjects see the ruler and the ruler sees the subjects (in Machiavelli, *The Prince*), the way Europeans saw the inhabitants of the “new world” and vice versa (Montaigne, *On Cannibals*), the way nocturnal animals that prefer hearing to sight “see” the environment (in Jakob von Uexküll’s analyses), the fact that blood is to the jaguar roughly what manioc beer is to the Native Americans (in Eduardo Viveiros de Castro’s analyses). One should not forget the novel as a genre associated, from its birth, with a sense of the “relativity of points of view,” the multiplicity of which in Cervantes, for example, encourages not a synthesis of the way Sancho Panza and Don Quixote see things, but burlesque, humor, and joy. The tradi-

tion of perspective is continued by artworks and land art installations that break out of the stereotypes of the central perspective. Robert Smithson in works such as *Gyrostasis* stages “a gaze gazing onto nothing but its own loss,” thereby initiating an experience of the absence of perspective.

Promises of Perspective: Sharing

Post-truth claims fall under a kind of perspectivism that Alloa calls “reclusive.” It elevates one’s own perspective to a single view and is thus a combination of closedness and universality (which is encouraged by social networks, for example, by their increasing personalization of the content offered). What he recommends against this autistic perspectivism is “diagonal” perspectivism. This takes seriously the “conflict of perspectives.” Everything boils down to the question of what idea of sharing Alloa is promoting when he speaks of the “conflict of perspectives” as something to be shared. He offers two types of conflictual sharing.

First, the hunter trying to shift into the perspective of the prey to better hunt it or the warrior attempting to understand “the enemy’s point of view.” Here, the claim that perspective is shared implies no cooperation whatsoever. It states only a formal structure of experience that is well compatible with the absence of sharing in the actual course of experience: the hunter kills an animal, the warrior defeats an opponent, the conqueror wipes out the indigenous inhabitants (also thanks to the ability to share perspective). There is no empathy, participation, or bond.

Second, when jointly perceiving and discussing a work of art or a movie, we might conflict, yet the

fundamental situation is one of co-perception (Maurice Merleau-Ponty). In such a sharing, the “dispute shapes the collectivities that are involved” and makes it impossible to “return to unilateral standpoints.”

In these two sets of observations, a different understanding of conflict is at work. A confrontation between prey and hunter is different from a dispute over the interpretation of an image in the art gallery. While in the second conflict, knowledge of the other perspective can enrich both of them, in the case of the first it contributes to the victory of one side at the expense of the other. In articulating the book’s central claim that perspective enables sharing, Alloa relies on the second and downplays the first.

Conflict of Perspectives: What Conflict?

What significantly reduces Alloa’s contribution to understanding the perspectives that divide society is the fact that he limits himself to an epistemological view of perspective. Lacking is the ontological understanding of perspectivity, present in some of his own sources (Merleau-Ponty or Hans-Georg Gadamer): perspective is not a way of seeing only but also a way of being. The paradigm example from Merleau-Ponty is not the one of two people contemplating the same countryside (or painting), but a person trying to regain balance (after losing it on an uneven surface) or trying to reshape their life-orientation after a severe loss (of a close person). When regaining one’s balance or reshaping one’s orientation, the person in question interacts with other people and events, seeing them from a certain perspective as supportive, obstructive, or indifferent. Perspective makes part of the search for

orientation, which for Merleau-Ponty is synonymous to being. Gadamer uses the perspectivist vocabulary to point out that, when reading an ancient text or facing an uncertain future, we stand in our tradition or “standpoint.” Contrary to the epistemological take, the primary focus is not on this or that reality but on the orientation of someone’s being (balance regained, life scenario reconstructed, a communal life organized to face a future). The reality is not to be observed from a perspective but something to be taken into account or denied, as in the cases of the traumatic denial of a loss, in the way one shapes an orientation. An orientation has always a temporal aspect (a future) and a reality reference (things and events seen from a perspective).

When confronting post-truth and factual falsehood in general, it is not enough to refute it. In this, Alloa is right. Claims such as “the attack on Ukraine was not unprovoked” (my example) are divisive. As Alloa states, they are “undermining the belief in a common and shared world,” and he is right here too. And yet, his epistemological take seems to grasp not the core of the conflict but its manifestations. What should stand in focus is the orientation out of which these reality claims are made. The question is not whether we can share certain claims about reality, but whether (and why) we share an orientation that builds the precondition for such claims. There is a conflict of orientations beyond the conflict of perspectives. ◀

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The Hegelian Politics of Contradiction

BY BARTOSZ WÓJCIK

Can Hegel offer insights relevant to our turbulent times? The politics of contradiction seeks to answer this question. It emphasizes that reality is inherently contradictory and that efforts to impose abstract ideals are often doomed to failure.

Things are fundamentally different from their appearance because they are inherently contradictory; they do not embody what they appear to be. No entity is free from this ontological contradiction; indeed, an ideal and reconciled state is a fiction. According to Hegel, reality is characterized by disharmony, conflict, and the dialectical struggle of opposites. The prospect of permanently overcoming contradictions through a higher synthesis, he argues, is illusory. Hegel's profound contribution as a philosopher lies in his recognition that any ambitious endeavor, whether social or existential, that attempts to impose an abstract ideal on the intricate structure of reality is destined to produce results contrary to its original intentions. The truth often turns out to be bitter and disappointing, and acknowledging this reality from the outset can prevent the most spectacular failures.

The affirmation of contradiction can evoke the semblance of a nihilistic-catastrophic stance, suggesting a foreshadowing of an inescapable apocalypse: if everything we engage with inevitably transforms into its antithesis, and if every action culminates in outcomes contrary to intentions, one might wonder whether resignation is the best course—merely to watch from afar as the world descends into chaos. This idea resonates with the imagery found in Lucretius's *De Rerum Natura*:

*'Tis sweet, when, down the
mighty main, the winds
Roll up its waste of waters,
from the land
To watch another's
laboring anguish far,
Not that we joyously
delight that man
Should thus been smitten,
but because 'tis sweet
To mark what evils
we ourselves be spared'*

We can no longer be isolated from this malignancy; it is we who navigate alongside the sailor in the tumultuous storm. Blaise Pascal was right to say that we cannot remain distant spectators of catastrophe. As modern individuals, we are irrevocably aboard (*embarqué*), unable to escape or gaze from a safe distance at the calamities encircling us.

This brings us to the first lesson of the politics of contradiction. For Hegel, the intrinsic opacity and unpredictability of our actions implies



Hegel and Napoleon in Jena, 1806.

that we cannot adhere to a singular pattern of change. Our political program must be plastic, as Catherine Malabou suggests, rather than merely flexible, reminiscent of the emancipatory projects of the 20th century. This plasticity requires a constant metamorphosis of the essence, as opposed to superficial changes that leave the essence unchanged—a fundamental illusion of any ideology. What is crucial here is the shift from merely contemplating transformation to transforming our thought process itself. Hegel is not concerned with adapting a concept to reality, nor with distorting reality to fit a concept (an extreme manifestation of this is Stalinism), but with altering the concept itself, which is the greatest challenge for a philosopher.

The second lesson of the politics of contradiction, then, is that in order to understand the shifts that occur within phenomena, we must transform the very frameworks through which we interpret them: the concepts or lenses shaping our worldview. Many theories (a word de-

rived from the Greek *théa*—ways of seeing) become fixated on preserving their own theoretical integrity, striving to maintain coherence and identity even as they remain fragile, incoherent, and contradictory, much like the realities they seek to encapsulate.

This leads to political theory's core dilemma, according to Slavoj Žižek: why do seemingly virtuous initiatives produce catastrophic, counterintuitive results? Why do progressive ideals morph into their stark opposites (modern freedom into market subjugation, human rights into a pretext for military intervention, liberal democracy into right-wing populism, and emancipatory revolutions into oppressive state terror)? One example is the history of 20th century communism, which, in Hegelian fashion, ended twice: once as tragedy in the Stalinist era, and again as farce in the Gorbachev era. Hegelian dialectics provides a framework for dealing with this dilemma—by illuminating negativity as the underlying force that governs all concepts, it posits that contradictions at the

ontological level drive the evolution of everything that exists, which is why entities invariably transform into their opposites; only through such contradictions can they exist at all!

This is a defeatist attitude, but therein lies its strength. First, the recognition of irreducible antagonism avoids two major pitfalls of progressive modern politics: transformism and reformism. The first, identified by James Scott, concerns “large-scale utopian social engineering projects” rooted in the “ideology of modernization,” which asserts the need to overcome the contradictions and conflicts internal to the social realm. Conversely and equally utopian from a Hegelian perspective is the moderate politics of minor reforms designed to maintain the status quo. This is exemplified by the prevailing mindset among contemporary elites who advocate “green capitalism” and altered consumption patterns as solutions to the climate crisis. They overlook the reality that such proposed solutions are part of the problem, for it is untenable to save the planet and capitalism at

the same time; one must choose—this is the axial antagonism of our time. In their naivete, these elites assume that the mounting contradictions can be resolved and mediated in perpetuity. Yet Hegel challenges us to confront insurmountable antagonisms, suggesting that efforts to transcend them only serve to exacerbate their intensity—the prime example being the issue of the “rabble” in his *Philosophy of Right*, which represents an absolute recoil indelible from the modern state.

What positive or constructive outcomes might result from this dialectical politics? In Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Satan observes: “What reinforcement we may gain from Hope / If not what resolution from despair.”² The third lesson of the politics of contradiction underlines the hopelessness of our situation—humanity faces potential extinction through climate catastrophe, nuclear war, or an asteroid strike, among other threats. And yet it is precisely this despair that gives this politics its paradoxical strength. A radical transformation of our circumstances can

emerge from more modest interventions: a redefinition of the signifiers that articulate our dire condition. For Hegel, this transformation is conservative in that it prioritizes the preservation of humanity as it is, rather than the fabrication of a new social ideal. It is also moderate in recognizing the inevitable side effects of any decision and accepting the new antagonisms that will result, in stark contrast to the finalist and totalizing aspirations of modern social engineering. One could even follow the dialectical fatalist Frank Ruda and suggest that real change requires the acceptance that the apocalypse has already happened—that all is irrevocably lost. But it does not mean an abstract negation of everything. Rather, it is the embodiment of a peculiar subversion, the affirmation of the existence of the impossible point that opens the horizon to the new. Hegel describes this act as “release” or “letting go” (*Entlassen*). We need to liberate ourselves from the compulsion to fight the crisis, to let go of our grasp in order to discover a new solution capable of truly subverting the crisis or, in Hegelian terms, moving it to another, less destructive level.

Finally, we arrive at the fourth lesson of the Hegelian politics of contradiction: the essential task of philosophical inquiry is to articulate accurately the tensions and conflicts—the underlying antagonisms—of contemporary reality, such as the conflict between the planet and capitalism. Sometimes emphasizing a particular postulate or a single term within a political program can alter the course of a revolution—as Lenin famously asserted: “every little difference may become a big one if it is insisted on.”³ In a contingent universe, therefore, a desperate conservative's adamant defense of the erosion of workers' rights or of the dismantling of the welfare state may well become a genuine revolution. This is because such demands cannot be met within the constraints of the prevailing system. <

1) Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura*, trans. William Ellery Leonard, (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1916), Book 2, lines 1–6 (Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura*, Book II, line 1 (tufts.edu)).
2) John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, Project Gutenberg, 2001 (www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/20), Book I, lines 222–223.
3) Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back* (https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1904/onestep/).

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Homage to Kant in Kolkata

BY MANIDIPA SANYAL AND SUBHORANJAN DASGUPTA

In West Bengal, the reception of Immanuel Kant's thought testifies to the utmost reverence for this pillar of idealist German philosophy.

Three leading Bengali contemporary philosophers—Bimal Krishna Matilal, Jitendra Nath Mohanty, and Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen—remained devoted to Immanuel Kant throughout their academic lives. The first two, who enjoyed international renown, have passed away, while Sen is still writing and teaching. More than once, Sen told one of the authors: “You have to read the *Critique of Pure Reason* and the *Critique of Practical Reason* meticulously.” Mohanty, one of the most celebrated exponents of Edmund Husserl’s phenomenology, told a journalist:

I have a bookshelf just above my bed where I keep those few books which I cherish utmost. I turn the pages of these books before I fall asleep. I must tell you, three texts of Immanuel Kant have been kept on this bookshelf. These are The Moral Law, Critique of Judgement, and Perpetual Peace.

As for Matilal, who was the Spalding Professor of Religion and Philosophy at Oxford University, one just has to read his masterpiece, *Perceptions*, to realize to what extent he was influenced by Kant. *Perceptions* enacts a brilliant dialogue between occidental and oriental philosophy, and Kant is a primary figure in this dialogue. The deathless deities in the pantheon raised by Matilal are Adi Shankara, Srinivasa Ramanujan, and Nagajurna from the Indian side and René Descartes, Kant, and Ludwig Wittgenstein from the Western one.

But, even before these three thinkers’ intense epistemological engagement with Kant, two acclaimed Bengali professors wrote excellent commentaries on his philosophy in Bengali: Krishnachandra Bhattacharjee and Rash Vihari Das. The English translation by Mohanty of Bhattacharjee’s treatise, *Kantdarsaner Tatparjo (Implications of the Philosophy of Kant)*, was inspired by an epilogue attached to the original that was written by Das. The reverential translator pointed out that, in the latter half of the 20th century, Indian scholars were eager to avoid an exclusively Eurocentric approach. They preferred to write “philosophy in self-conscious continuity with the great tradition of Indian philosophy.”

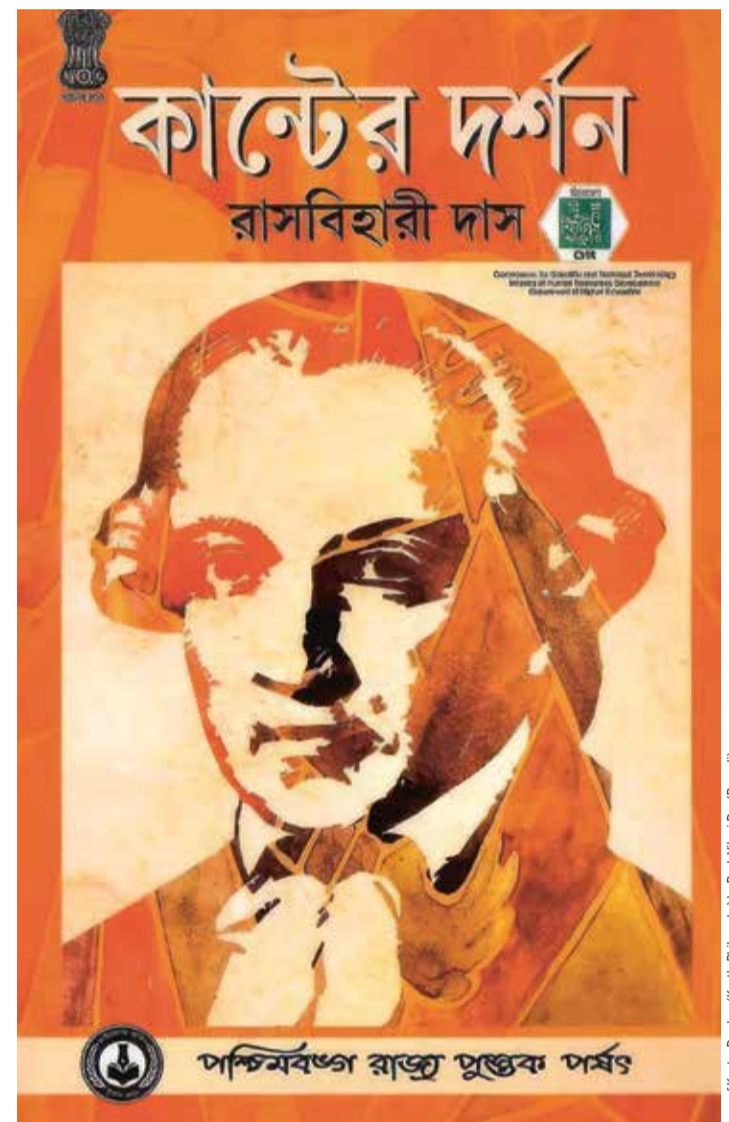
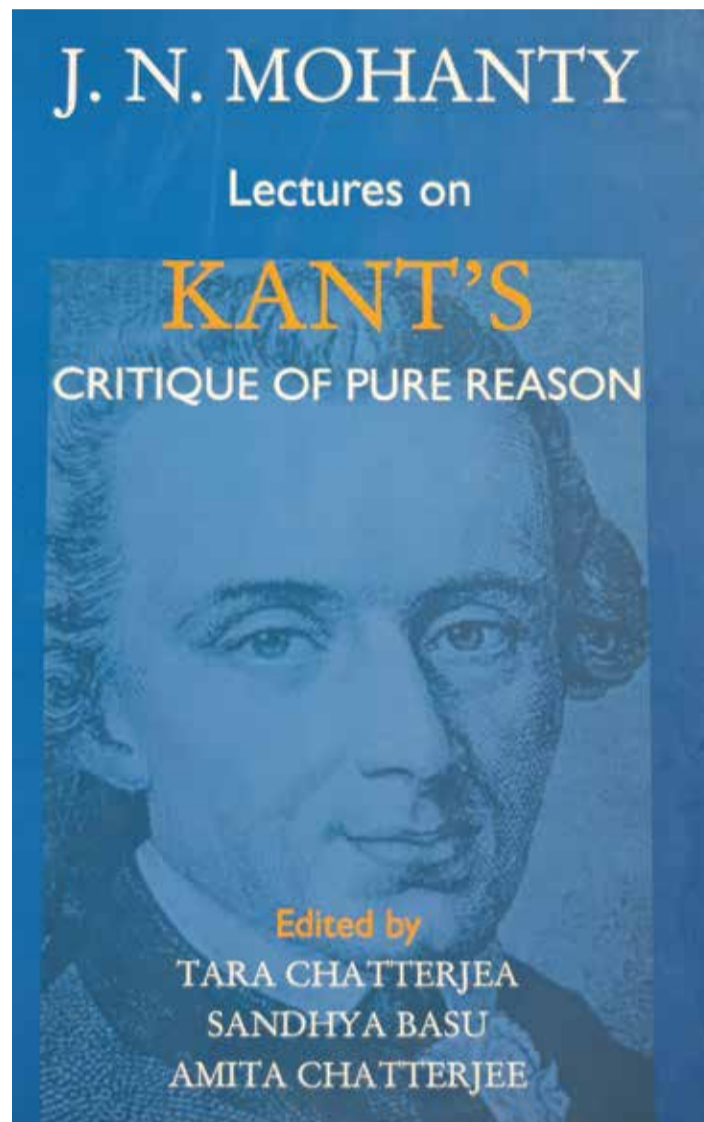
Accordingly, Mohanty divided Bhattacharjee’s text into three sections: Examination of Willing or Duty, Examination of Knowing, and Examination of Feeling. He explored these through the prism of Advaita Vedanta, a major school of Indian philosophy that considers Brahman the only reality. Further, Bhattacharjee did not offer a simplistic interpretation of Kant’s theoretical and practical consciousness. Rather, he presented a *Varttika* or constructive evaluation, to use the relevant

term in Indian philosophy. Bhattacharjee’s text emphasizes the importance of theoretical and practical knowledge in the Kantian scheme as well as the reality of self. Indeed, the latter is considered Kant’s fun-

the most important of the three. It is here that Kant highlights a priori intellectual feeling—that is, reverence for the moral law, which was the cornerstone of his philosophical scheme.

only the philosophy of German Idealism but also the 20th-century linguistic turn, phenomenological and hermeneutic movements” —though he reminded us that his lectures did not merely follow Husserl’s writings

home the message, which is now direly needed, an academic quoted the last, clinching line from the fifth chapter of *Perpetual Peace*: “But all politics must bend the knee to the principle of right, and may, in that



Cover of Kant's Philosophy by Rash Vihari Das (Bengali)

damental concept. He also analyzed Kant’s concept of imagination (*Einbildung*), whose Indian equivalent is *Kalpna* and which plays a crucial role in Kant’s epistemology as well as in his aesthetic cogitations.

The concept of free self as autonomous willing constitutes the foundation of Bhattacharjee’s interpretation of Kant. He reminds us that in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, while theoretical knowledge is limited to experience the scope of practical reason is extended further. Kant discussed the concept of self with reference to the concept of freedom: “Freedom in the practical sense is the independence of the power of choice from necessitation of impulses of sensibility.” In other words, says Bhattacharjee, it is natural causality that belongs to the phenomenal world while moral causality belongs to the noumenal world, which can only be cogitated upon. Kant tried to lay the foundation for the certainty of modern science as well as the possibility of human freedom in his very first *Critique*. According to Bhattacharjee, so far as the knowledge of self as non-object is concerned, the second *Critique* is

Das was a student of Bhattacharjee. His book is titled *Kanter Darshan (Kant's Philosophy)*. He admits that it is no surprise that there are differences between the interpretation given by him and that given by Bhattacharjee, because even in Germany interpreters differ regarding Kant’s original writings. Das starts the discussion in the context of empiricist and rationalist tradition in epistemology. He focuses on the issue that any independent object, according to Kant, is not the object of knowledge. Further, that which figures as object of knowledge is qualified by our sensibility and understanding. Kant’s predecessors never raised questions about the nature, possibility, and limitation of human knowledge. Das also highlights the crucial Kantian reflection that moral life is the best religious life. Ethics, according to Kant, is the gateway to religion.

These two books were followed by Mohanty’s *Lectures on Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*. His reading of Kant was influenced by analytical and phenomenological traditions. He was guided by the post-Kantian philosophical discourse—that is, “not

on Kant. At the same time, the crucial questions of whether Kant is a formalist, conceptualist, or intuitionist in the sphere of mathematical philosophy, and of whether his philosophy of physics needs any fundamental change, are considered by Mohanty, who received his lessons on contemporary physics and mathematics at Göttingen University.

More recently, one must also note Kumudranjan Goswami’s book, *Kant's Metaphysical Exposition of the Concept of Space: An Exegetical and Critical Study*. An erudite Kantian scholar, Goswami taught at the University of Calcutta, and commendably captured Kant’s thesis on the metaphysics of experience.

At present, scholars in West Bengal underline the importance of Kant’s political philosophy and historical vision. Obviously, our tense and turbulent times, scarred by ravaging wars, are prompting them to seek refuge in Kant’s political classic: *Perpetual Peace*. In a recent seminar held at the Institute of Development Studies in Kolkata, participants pointedly referred to the categorical imperative inherent in Kant’s political doctrine. To drive

way, hope to reach, although slowly perhaps, a level where it may shine upon men for all time.”

Sen and Matilal were colleagues at Oxford, and bound in a web of mutual admiration. While Matilal observed that Sen had “crossed the limits of pure economics a long ago, he is a philosopher in his own right,” Sen lauded Matilal as “the greatest Indian philosopher after Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan,” our first philosopher-president. Matilal confessed to us in one unforgettable conversation:

I have to leave this world with one unfulfilled desire. Had I the chance, I would have engaged myself in a heartfelt dialogue with Kant. I would have discussed the baffling nature of moral dilemma with the most illustrious advocate of the moral law.

This attests to the reverence West Bengal has and will continue to have for Kant. ◀

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For a New Culture of Technological Design

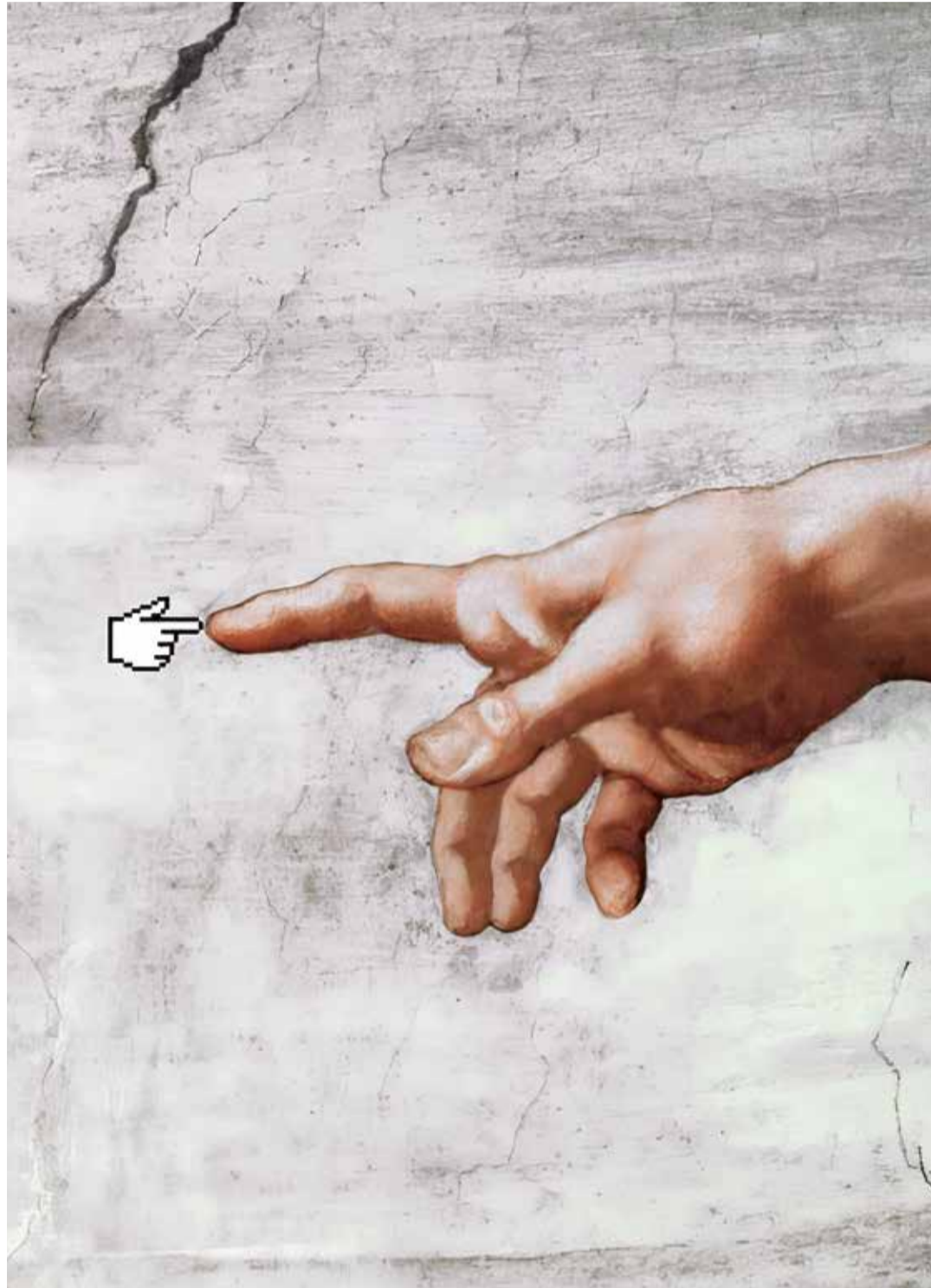
BY VIOLA SCHIAFFONATI

In a world in which AI systems increasingly affect our lives, we need a new culture of technological design. A critical discussion on the design choices in these technologies and their political charge is more urgent than ever.

In 1980, the philosopher of technology Langdon Winner argued that artifacts embody politics, by which he meant that not only humans but also technical things have political qualities. In his paper “Do Artifacts Have Politics?”¹ he extensively discussed “racist overpasses” and “labor-stealing tomato harvesting machines.” Artifacts concretize specific forms of power, either intentionally, as in the case of Robert Moses’s overpasses deliberately designed in the 1930s to make impossible public transportation and so racial minorities’ access to some recreational parks, or unintentionally, as when the introduction of mechanical harvesters in the 1940s reshaped the social relationships of tomato production in California.

Today a special kind of artifact has taken center stage in the public debate: artificial intelligence (AI) systems. They have a strong political charge, in intentional and unintentional ways. Think, for example, of the recommender systems embedded in large online platforms, such as social networks, and their impact at the individual and collective levels. Yet, the public debate is mostly dominated by controversies between those raising concerns about the catastrophic risks of AI and those persuaded that it will solve any problem. Instead, a more concrete and urgent risk concerns the political qualities present at the beginning, at the center, and at the end of the AI design processes. The point here is not that the problem of how AI systems are designed, by whom, for which goals, and in which context is the only or the most important one, or that every problem with AI (from bias and discrimination to privacy and responsibility) can be solved with good design. Rather, it is that we should devote more attention to the power of design and, accordingly, to how some design choices can determine the moral and political connotations of these artifacts.

A key element in this is to rethink our current technological design culture. Technologies do not exist in a vacuum—they are shaped by the societies in which they are developed and, conversely, they shape them. This is particularly true for those technologies, such as AI, that are today deeply intertwined into the fabric of society and shape the way we live: in how we conduct business, how we make and nourish friendships, how we see the world, how we decide on a purchase, and how we



choose a movie, a song, or a romantic relationship. In many cases they perpetuate, and sometimes they reinforce, historical, racist, gender, or sexual-orientation biases.

It is tempting to go back to the case of Moses’s overpasses and suggest that the problem is only in the choice of the wrong (racist, in the case of Moses) values, as if any negative outcome could be solved by incorporating positive values into design. But things are more complicated and nuanced than they appear. To design with positive values and beneficial outputs in mind does not guarantee against unexpected and unintentional forms of technological mediation: the tomato-harvesting machine is a case at point. If it is essential to try to anticipate possible problems at the

design level, it is also fundamental to learn how to imagine future possible consequences that can emerge when very complex, highly flexible, and, in many cases, still experimental technologies, such as AI, are inserted in their contexts of use.

So while acknowledging that designing is power, it is fundamental to rethink of this power accordingly. This means understanding not only how to design fairer, more inclusive, beneficial, and sustainable AI technologies. We also need to design them in more transparent and democratic ways that consider the broader socio-technical context in which they are embedded. This is a far from easy task for which there is no simple solution. Education, research, and public discussion

are probably the most important pillars to start with. Education is vital to create a class of future designers of technologies aware of the moral, social, and political charge of the artifacts they create. Research is important to offer spaces of experimentation where different expertise and approaches can be integrated. Public discussion is crucial to promote a common ground for alternative views.

Around the world there are already several promising efforts that need to be cultivated further. The Digital Humanism movement founded in Vienna in 2019 is one of them. The Vienna Manifesto lays out its motivation and goals, and it calls to action and invites academic communities, industrial leaders,

politicians, policymakers, and professional societies to promote the design of information technologies in accordance with human needs and values.² This and similar initiatives are essential for the definition of an ambitious agenda in the direction of a new culture of technological design. This agenda should focus on the scientific and the educational levels, but it should also include philosophical, ethical, and political elements. Building a future in which AI’s great power is shared among all for the benefit of humankind can only be achieved if we stop looking at AI as a merely technical problem and instead bring in other perspectives to design the kind of society we want to live in. Social impacts and negative consequences from the design of these technologies are not issues to be solved *ex post*—they must be addressed as part of the design process itself. Moreover, design choices need to be reconceptualized as political ones as well, and thus as requiring an open and wide debate on their possible outcomes.

To paraphrase Joseph Weizenbaum, the famous computer scientist and computer ethics pioneer, the relevant issues are not technical but ethical and political.³ However, good intentions are not enough when designing complex socio-technical systems, such as AI, that affect our present and future life at the individual and the collective levels. Scientists, engineers, and computer scientists equipped with an appreciation for humanities are far better prepared to evade the pitfalls of technocratic power. They will be better leaders in a changing world that needs to navigate the complex and interconnected challenges of AI development, climate change, and increasing social and economic inequalities. Many difficult issues remain open, but this is not an excuse to postpone this paradigmatic shift: a new design culture for technology should be the rule rather than the exception. ◀

1) Winner, L. (1980), “Do artifacts have politics?”, *Daedalus*, 109, 121–136.

2) Vienna Manifesto on Digital Humanism (2019), caiml.org/dighum/dighum-manifesto/

3) Weizenbaum, J. (1976), *Computer Power and Human Reason: From Judgment to Calculation*, W. H. Freeman and Company.

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Digital Governance: Between Populism and Technocracy

BY ROGERS BRUBAKER

Populism and technocracy are ordinarily understood as antithetical: each presents itself as a response to problems created or exacerbated by the other. Yet the digital revolution has paradoxically fostered both, leading to a new form of technopopulism.

Digital hyperconnectivity accentuates the chronic populism of late modern societies in two ways. First, it is a technology—and an ideology—of immediacy or disintermediation. Hyperconnectivity disrupts or circumvents institutional intermediaries of all kinds; it promises to connect people directly to news and information, audiences directly to creators, and citizens directly to political leaders.

Complete disintermediation is a myth: digital platforms are themselves a new class of intermediaries. But the promise of immediacy rings true. Older intermediaries have been bypassed or rendered obsolete. Digitally mediated connections between figures such as Donald Trump or Narendra Modi and their followers are more immediate than older institutionally mediated and filtered connections between politicians and citizens. And citizens' relation to public knowledge claims—though mediated by digital platforms like Google, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and TikTok—is more direct than it was when public knowledge was primarily organized by a single state public broadcaster or a few large networks.

Disintermediation is a powerfully attractive ideal, and it is precisely a populist ideal. For populism is itself an ideology of immediacy. Populism promises to empower ordinary people by disempowering mediating institutions and the elites comfortably ensconced in them. It delegitimizes political parties, professional expertise, courts, and the mainstream media and demands a direct relation between “the people” and the exercise of power.

Hyperconnectivity also fosters populism by contributing to the popularization of culture and politics. It does so in three ways. First, it opens up more accessible and engaging forms of cultural and political participation and broadens the range of participants. Digital platforms have made it much easier for those outside the cultural or political mainstream, including the disaffected citizens to whom populist politicians often appeal, to find like-minded others and establish a public presence.

Second, the digital public sphere makes calculations of popularity—and representations of what “the people” like, want, prefer, and believe—more central to culture and politics. Technologies of continuous and granular quantification render



Photo: Charles McIntock/Wikimedia Commons

“the people” visible and knowable in new ways. Digitally mediated ways of consulting “the people” and registering their preferences have been at the forefront of digital democracy initiatives. And renderings of the popular have become central to the everyday workings of culture and politics. Ubiquitous “trending” algorithms, for example, do not simply register what is popular for a particular public at a particular moment; as Tarleton Gillespie notes, they amplify and reinforce the popularity that they register. The digitally networked public sphere thus enshrines the cardinal populist criterion of popularity as the ultimate arbiter of value.

Finally, hyperconnectivity favors popular—that is, “low” rather than “high”—cultural and political styles. “Low” styles are attention-seeking and taboo-breaking; they flout the constraints of polite speech and political correctness, and they favor confrontation, emotionalization, personalization, and hyper-simplification. Such “low” styles were already encouraged by the television-era mediatization of politics. But they are even more strongly favored in the highly competitive digital attention economy—and in what I call the “attention polity.” They have the best chance of gaining traction by breaking through the glut of digital content.

The ecology of hyperconnectivity thus has deep affinities with the logic of populism. In the cultural domain, it erodes the power of gatekeepers, engenders new forms of popular creativity, and universalizes metrics that record and amplify popularity. In the political sphere, it allows “ordinary” people—disaffected citizens in particular—to be addressed directly, it facilitates the emergence of counter-publics, and it rewards the “low” styles that are best suited to mobilizing against the establishment.

Yet at the same time, the new modes of algorithmic governance enabled by hyperconnectivity are deeply technocratic. Algorithmic governance is not restricted to governments. It is much more developed in the private sector, especially by the great tech platforms themselves. For these platforms have the data and machine-learning expertise to employ much more sophisticated forms of algorithmic governance. And they are centrally involved in the business of governing. They govern, of course, the activities of their users through their design and control of the digital architectures that determine what can be done on the platforms. But their governing power extends to public life more broadly. Most crucially, they govern who sees what, and who can say what, in the digital public sphere.

Algorithmic governance, like technocracy in general, is premised on specialized knowledge. Yet that knowledge is not embodied in trained human experts, as in traditional understandings of technocracy. Instead, it is disembodied: encoded in algorithms and generated by complex computational procedures that analyze large volumes of data—above all the digital trace data that the great platform companies effortlessly capture and exploit. The justification for entrusting decision-making to such procedures is that the knowledge they generate and their capacity to find optimal solutions for precisely defined problems are superior to the knowledge and optimizing capabilities of even the most highly trained humans.

Technocratic ideals also underlie and animate the broader spirit of what Evgeni Morozov calls “technological solutionism.” Solutionist thinking, like technocracy in general, is depoliticizing. It seeks to transform social and political problems into technical problems. It thus exemplifies the “assimilation of politics to engineering” that Michael Oakeshott saw as characteristic of rationalist politics in general.

Technocracy and populism are generally seen as antithetical. While technocracy entrusts decision-making powers to experts (or to expert-designed knowledge procedures like

algorithms), populism distrusts expertise. And while technocracy is depoliticizing, seeking to insulate decision-making from popular interference, populism is re-politicizing. Populism claims to reassert political control over issues that are seen as having been removed from the domain of democratic decision-making and entrusted to unaccountable bureaucrats, experts, or courts.

Yet as Christopher Bickerton and Carlo Invernizzi Accetti have argued in their book *Technopopulism*, the reciprocal antagonism of populism and technocracy conceals an underlying affinity: both are opposed to the complex and messy institutional mediations of party democracy. As the structural foundations of party democracy have eroded in the last half-century, political competition has come to be structured increasingly by what they call a “technopopulist” political logic, characterized by conjoined appeals to “the people” and to problem-solving “competence.”

Bickerton and Invernizzi Accetti are not concerned with new communications technologies; the “techno” in their “technopopulism” refers to technocracy, not to technology. Yet hyperconnectivity powerfully reinforces the synthesis of populism and technocracy that they describe. As a technology and ideology of immediacy, it exacerbates the crisis of institutional mediation to which technopopulism claims to respond, by contributing to the hollowing out of parties and of the press as mediating institutions. As a technology of the popular, hyperconnectivity generates new ways of mobilizing, consulting, and measuring “the people” as well as new ways of claiming to act on their behalf. And as a technology of knowledge, it affords new ways of knowing and governing the social world, and new ways of recasting social problems as technical problems. If technopopulist appeals to “the people” and to expertise increasingly “structure our politics and shape our experience of democracy,” as Bickerton and Invernizzi Accetti argue in the final sentence of their book, hyperconnectivity increasingly structures and shapes appeals to “the people” and to expertise. The “techno” in technopopulism may thus indeed refer to technology as well as technocracy. ◀

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Digitaler Gesetzeszwang

VON ERICH PREM

Künstliche Intelligenz und andere digitale Technologien versprechen den Zwangsvollzug von Gesetzen. Warum wir uns das nicht wünschen sollten.

Im eher durchschnittlichen Science-Fiction-Streifen *Demolition Man* wird der von Sylvester Stallone dargestellte Polizist aus dem Kälteschlaf und damit aus der Vergangenheit geholt. Weil sein antiquiertes Fluchen gegen die inzwischen geltenden Sprechnormen verstößt, erhält er wiederholt Strafzettel, die von kleinen überall hängenden Wandautomaten ausgestellt werden. Im Film ist dies mäßig komisch, es ist aber heute keine Science-Fiction mehr. Computer können nicht nur automatisch strafen, sie können Straf- und Übeltaten gleich von vornherein unmöglich machen. Denken wir nur an den Chatbot, der nicht über nationalsozialistische Themen sprechen darf oder an den in Wien zum Verleih angebotenen E-Scooter, der in einer Fußgängerzone nicht schneller als ein paar km/h fährt. Es ist hochwahrscheinlich, dass wir davon in Zukunft noch viel mehr sehen werden. Im Folgenden will ich darlegen, warum dies keine wünschenswerte Entwicklung ist.

Es gehört zu den modernen Binsenweisheiten, dass Digitaltechnologie alle Bereiche des Lebens erobert. Dies gilt für die Arbeit ebenso wie für die Verwaltung, aber vor allem auch dafür, wie wir unsere Freizeit verbringen. Diese Entwicklung gründet nicht nur in einer zunehmenden Verwendung digitaler Werkzeuge, sondern liegt auch daran, dass die Dinge zunehmend digital gesteuert werden. Nach einer ersten Welle an Digitalisierung und einer weiteren ihrer Anbindung ans Internet, stehen wir nun an der Schwelle zur Ausstattung von Alltags- und Arbeitsdingen mit „Intelligenz“. Die Palette von digital gesteuerten, drahtlos mit dem Internet verbundenen und mit künstlicher Intelligenz ausgestatteten Objekten reicht vom eigenen Auto oder Roller über die Heizungs- und Stereoanlage sogar bis zum Kühlschrank. Was also liegt näher als diese Dinge auch dafür zu verwenden, Gesetze oder andere Normen volldigital zu implementieren und diejenigen, die digitale Werkzeuge verwenden, davon auszuschließen, Normen zu übertreten? Dies kann geschehen, indem digitale Systeme den Zugang verwehren, die Nutzung einschränken bzw. selbsttätig beurteilen, welche Funktionen für wen in welcher Situation oder zu welcher Zeit ausführbar sind. So kann sich

der Mediaplayer weigern, einen urheberrechtlich geschützten Song abzuspielen und das Auto könnte in Zukunft entscheiden, nicht gegen die Einbahn zu fahren.

Das Befolgen von Gesetzen durch Technik zu erzwingen, ist nicht neu. Technikphilosophen diskutieren klassische Fälle wie Schlüssel, die sich nur bei versperrter Tür abziehen lassen, oder die unbeliebten Bodenschwellen, die Autofahrer zum langsamen Fahren zwingen sollen.

entstehenden Konsequenzen. Dieses Recht verteidigt die grundsätzliche Freiheit des Menschen, sich in seinen Handlungen auch anders zu entscheiden.

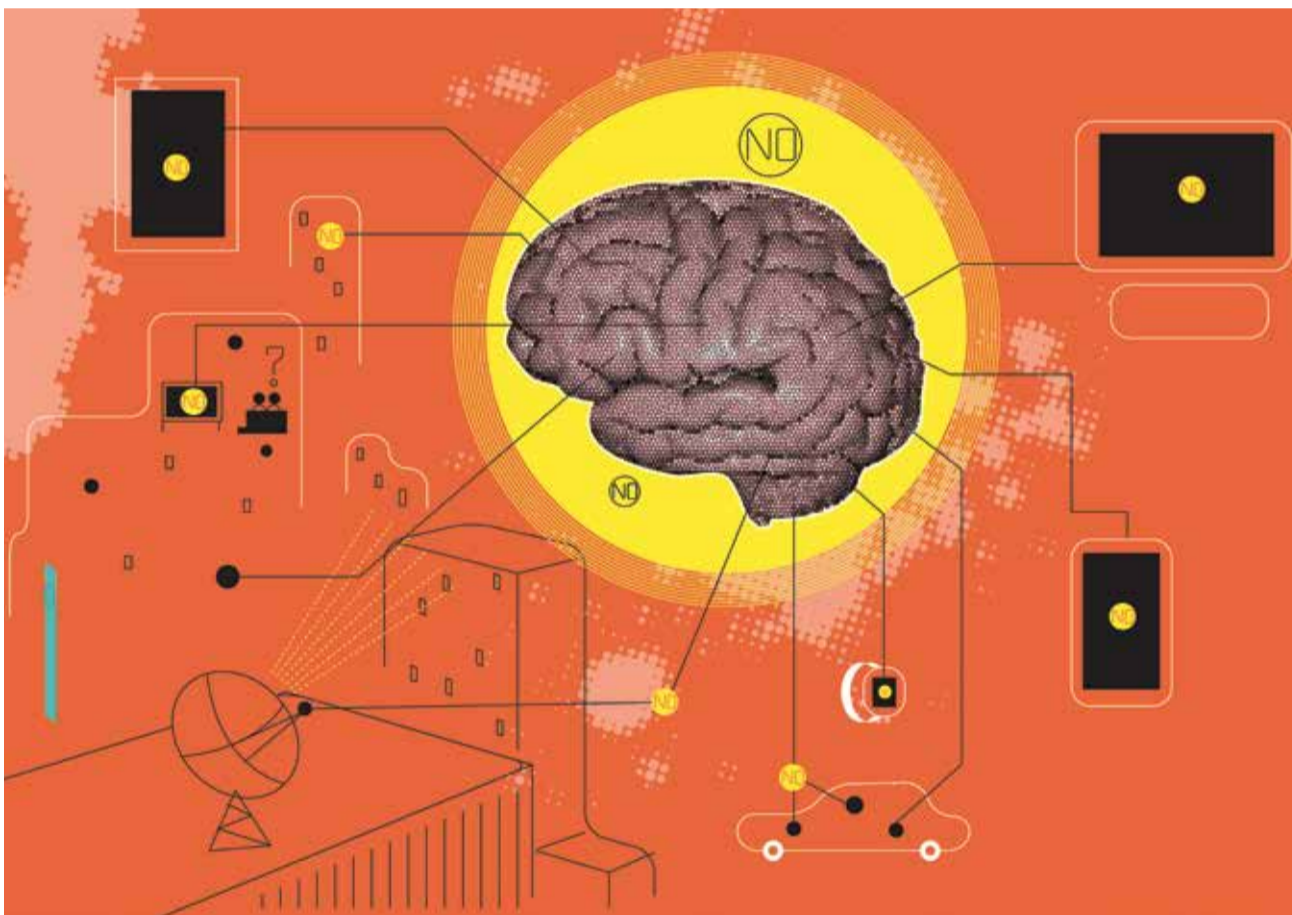
Neben dem Gedanken der Freiheit geht es auch darum anzuerkennen, dass das Recht nicht alle Situationen abdecken kann. Es gibt immer Ausnahmen, die es plausibel, ja manchmal sogar geboten erscheinen lassen, gegen eine Norm zu verstoßen. Welcher Polizist wür-

Computer können Situationen nur anhand formaler Kriterien beurteilen. Sie entscheiden auf der Grundlage der Sensordaten. Diese Sensoren sind typischerweise auf die Funktion der Geräte ausgerichtet. Die *Intention* der Person, die ein digitales Gerät bedient, bleibt für das System zwingend rätselhaft. Ob ein Bild etwa der Intention eines Künstlers entspringt oder ob es formal so aussieht, als wäre es pornografisch, weil eine nackte Person dargestellt

tomatisch und kontextunabhängig zu reduzieren. Menschliche Fehler können oft korrigiert werden, etwa durch Hinweise von anderen. Technologie neigt zur Gleichförmigkeit und Skalierung. Ein schlechter Polizist mag wenige falsch strafen, ein schlechter Algorithmus kann Tausende treffen.

Die Verwendung digitaler Technologie zur automatischen Normimplementierung führt zwingend zu Machtverschiebungen, oft vom Staat zum Privaten. Gewöhnlich ist es nämlich nicht der Staat, der die Implementierung der Technologie zum Zwangsvollzug übernimmt. Er lagert diese Leistung an private Unternehmen aus, denen damit auch die Details der Implementierung überlassen werden.

Vor allem aber ist nicht jede digitale Regelung demokratisch legitimiert. Wir sind umgeben von Systemen, deren Verhalten den Einfällen und Zielen ihrer Designer und den Eigentümern der sie herstellenden Unternehmen überlassen ist. Dies gilt auch für die Beschränkungen, die Systeme in ihrer Nutzung durchsetzen. Ein einfaches Beispiel sind heute etwa Chatbots oder Suchmaschinen, die teilweise bestehende Normen implementieren. Zum Bei-



Diese Beispiele wurden in der Vergangenheit oft verwendet, um zu zeigen, dass Technik nicht neutral ist. Sie begegnet uns durchaus selektiv. Schon die Türklinke ist oft an Rechtshändern und Erwachsenen orientiert.

Die Versuchung, digitale Möglichkeiten zur vorausschauenden Gesetzesdurchsetzung einzusetzen, ist groß. Viele wünschen sich einen möglichst vollautomatischen Gesetzesvollzug. Die Forderungen nach der automatischen Löschung gesetzeswidriger Inhalte in sozialen Netzwerken gehören ebenso dazu wie der Ruf nach automatischer Geschwindigkeitsreduktion für Fahrzeuge. Allerdings gibt es gute Gründe, warum wir uns das nicht wünschen sollten.

Zunächst stellt der voraussehlende Vollzug von Normen eine grundlegende Abkehr von der Praxis des Rechts dar. Das Recht straft den Übeltäter, verunmöglicht aber nicht die Tat. Der zwingende Vollzug der Norm stellt ein Abrücken vom Prinzip der Strafe *nach* Begehung einer Tat dar. Rechtsphilosophen sprechen (selten) vom Recht, das Recht zu verletzen – allerdings natürlich um den Preis der daraus

de einen Mann, der seine in den Wehen liegende Frau ins Krankenhaus bringt, etwa bestrafen, wenn er die höchstzulässige Geschwindigkeit auf dem Weg zum Krankenhaus überschreitet?

Innerhalb des Rechts gibt es den entschuldigenden Notstand. Aus ethischer Sicht führen solche Fälle zu Überlegungen, was wirklich wichtig ist. Diese Abwägungen sind heute Menschen überlassen. Im Beispiel ist dies der Polizist, der entscheiden muss, ob er einen Strafzettel ausstellt oder sich aufs Motorrad schwingt und die werdenden Eltern ins Krankenhaus begleitet. Dies können digitale Systeme nicht leisten. Die Abwägung menschlicher Interessen und Ziele gegen andere menschliche Interessen und Ziele oder Normen ist nicht nur komplex, sondern vor allem massiv abhängig von Situationen, Intentionen und vom Gesamtkontext. Es geht hier nicht darum, ob es eines Tages eine KI geben könnte, die derartige Fragen wird befriedigend beurteilen können – sondern darum, ob wir heute und morgen diese Abwägung außer Dienst stellen wollen, weil die Normverletzung vorab unmöglich gemacht wird.

ist, können Maschinen nicht erkennen. Natürlich gibt es auch absurde menschliche Fehlentscheidungen. Wir scheinen aber zunehmend zu vergessen, wie wichtig Intentionen für unsere ethischen und auch juristischen Urteile sind. Es macht einen Unterschied, warum wir etwas tun bzw. etwas tun wollten. Intentionen bestimmen, wie wir eine Handlung aus ethischer Perspektive einschätzen.

Technik – wie auch der Mensch – ist immer fehlerbehaftet. Freilich lassen sich einfache Regeln, wie etwa die Beschränkung der Geschwindigkeit, relativ leicht und verlässlich implementieren. Aber schon die Abgrenzung auf Gebiete von Fußgängerzonen mittels GPS ist diffiziler als man auf den ersten Blick meinen mag. Es ist leicht zu sehen, dass es eine Vielzahl von Fehlerquellen gibt, die entweder zu falsch bremsenden oder zu nicht beschränkten Fahrten mit E-Scootern führen können. Wir mögen dies beim E-Scooter vielleicht auch nicht so schlimm finden. Aber schon bei Autos werden viele – und zwar nicht nur deutsche Automobilhersteller – Bedenken haben, die Maximalgeschwindigkeit au-

spiel versuchen sie, die Nutzung von Chatbots für Nazi-propaganda zu verhindern. Sie realisieren diese Einschränkungen aber so, wie es Hersteller entscheiden. Sie normieren die Systeme eben nicht nur im Hinblick auf demokratisch beschlossene Gesetze. Vielmehr optimieren sie Systeme, damit sich deren Dienste gut verkaufen. In einer Art voraussehlendem Gehorsam kann dies zu überschießenden Ausschlüssen führen, wie etwa der Benachteiligung von Minderheiten oder der Beschränkung des Zugangs zu Wissen. Derartige praktische Normsetzung und durchsetzung erfolgt großteils unhinterfragt nach den Interessen der Hersteller. Sie führt zur *Ent-*, nicht zur *Ermächtigung* der User:innen. Der digitale Zwangsvollzug der Norm geht über die Welt von *Demolition Man* hinaus. Sie führt in eine, in der alle den Gesetzen folgen, weil sie müssen, nicht weil sie wollen. <

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Whatever Works? Künstliche Intelligenz in einer komplexen Welt

VON ANGELIKA ADENSAMER

Künstliche Intelligenz wird oft als Lösung für jede Art von Problemstellung betrachtet. Doch was kann KI in einer komplexen Welt wirklich? Anhand des Einsatzes von KI in der Erkennung von Hassrede und als Lügendetektor an den EU-Außengrenzen werden grundlegende Zweifel an der Funktionalität von KI-Anwendungen exemplarisch dargestellt.

Die Erwartungen an Künstliche Intelligenz (KI) zur Lösung komplexer gesellschaftlicher Probleme sind hoch. Die damit verbundenen Risiken sind bekannt: von Bias und Intransparenz bis hin zur potenziellen Unkontrollierbarkeit einer zukünftigen Superintelligenz. Zu selten wird aber die Frage gestellt: Was kann KI überhaupt und was nicht? Und wie stellt man dies fest? Aus sozialwissenschaftlicher Perspektive sind gesellschaftliche Probleme oft kaum quantifizierbar und ihre Lösungen folgen nicht einfachen Schemata. So setzt beispielsweise die Entwicklung von KI in den Bereichen Asyl, Migration und Strafverfolgung ein tiefes Verständnis für die zugrundeliegenden Probleme voraus, das, obwohl vorhanden, oftmals nicht berücksichtigt wird.

Die Bekämpfung von Hassrede auf Social-Media-Plattformen ist hierfür ein gutes Beispiel. Tausende Content-Moderator:innen sind rund um die Uhr – oft in Ländern des globalen Südens unter schwierigen Bedingungen und zu niedrigen Löhnen – damit beschäftigt, Inhalte zu überprüfen und gegebenenfalls zu löschen. Dieses System ist stark fehleranfällig und aufwendig. Eine KI-Anwendung, die Hassrede automatisch erkennen kann, könnte diesen Prozess weitaus effizienter gestalten. Der erste Schritt zur Entwicklung solcher Systeme besteht darin, Clickworker mit dem Annotieren von Trainingsdaten zu beauftragen. Diese Menschen treffen – oft nach einer oberflächlichen Einführung – Entscheidungen darüber, welche Inhalte als Hassrede gelten. Die Qualität der KI-Modelle hängt direkt von der Qualität dieser Daten ab.

Um zu evaluieren, wie gut verschiedene KI-Anwendungen zur Erkennung von Hassrede funktionieren, werden von vielen Techniker:innen in diesem Bereich universelle Benchmarks gefordert, um die Programme zu testen. Das klingt zwar sinnvoll, ist jedoch in der Realität ungeeignet. Die Regulierung von Hassrede ist ein komplexes Geflecht aus nationalem und internationalem Recht. Jedes Land hat eigene Definitionen von Hassrede. In Österreich etwa bestehen mehrere Straftatbestän-



de, die bestimmte Extremformen regeln, das Medienrecht sowie das Verbotsgesetz, das nationalsozialistische Wiederbetätigung kriminalisiert, während gleichzeitig das Recht auf freie Meinungsäußerung gewährleistet werden muss.

Die rechtliche Bewertung von Hassrede ist stark kontextabhängig und muss im Einzelfall geprüft werden. Auch Gerichte kommen mitunter in den gleichen Fällen zu unterschiedlichen Entscheidungen, so wurde Österreich schon des Öfteren vom Europäischen Gerichtshof für Menschenrechte wegen überschießender Strafen für beleidigende Aussagen wegen Verletzung des Rechts auf freie Meinungsäußerung verurteilt. Diese komplexe Gesetzeslage wird weiter kombiniert mit den (sich laufend ändernden) AGBs der Plattformen selbst, durch die die Grenzen des Sagbaren mitbestimmt werden.

Wenn Personen, die diese Hintergründe nicht kennen – seien es Clickworker oder Programmierer:innen selbst – die Datensets annotieren, dann tun sie das beispielsweise nach firmeninternen Vorgaben oder nach ihren persönlichen Wertvorstellungen. Der rechtliche Streit darüber, was akzeptable Kommunikation ist, zeigt, dass es in einer demokratischen, und von Vielfalt gekennzeichneten Welt große Unterschiede darüber gibt, was als Grenze des Rechts auf freie Meinungsäußerung gesehen wird, und zwar sowohl unter den Bürger:innen, als auch zwischen Staaten und Plattformen. Sich auf klare Grenzen des Sagbaren und den Schutz dessen, was sagbar blei-

ben muss, zu einigen, ist die Aufgabe von demokratischen Prozessen. Statt diese vielen Perspektiven miteinzubeziehen, wird ein „aus dem Bauch heraus“ erzeugtes Datenset ein genauso „aus dem Bauch heraus“ generiertes KI-Modell hervorbringen. Um komplexe Regulierungsprobleme zu lösen, ist eine solche KI daher nicht geeignet. In enger Zusammenarbeit mit Expert:innen im Feld von Hassrede, könnte eine solche KI-Anwendung jedoch durchaus nützlich sein, wenn sie eingeschränkte Aufgaben, wie Vorsortierung oder Kennzeichnung von eindeutig verbotener Hassrede, übernimmt und damit die menschlichen Entscheidungen unterstützt.

Das Problem der Untauglichkeit von KI für konkrete Problemstellungen verschärft sich dort, wo Programme auf der Basis von Annahmen generiert werden, die von Grund auf umstritten sind. Dies ist beispielsweise der Fall beim Einsatz von Emotionserkennung auf Basis von Gesichtsausdrücken zur Betrugserkennung (also als Lügendetektor) an den EU-Außengrenzen. In den letzten Jahren wurden Forschungsprojekte mit dem Ziel, eine solche Anwendung zu entwickeln, von der EU gefördert.

Die automatische Emotionserkennung beruht auf der Theorie des Psychologen Paul Ekman, nach der universelle Emotionen kulturunabhängig aus dem Gesicht ablesbar seien. Die Psychologin und Neurowissenschaftlerin Lisa Feldman Barrett und ihre Kolleg:innen kommen jedoch nach Durchsicht der einschlä-

gigen empirischen Studien zu dem Ergebnis, dass viele Teile der Theorie Ekman nicht belegt werden können und, dass wissenschaftliche Befunde dieser sogar widersprechen.¹ Außerdem besteht ein großer Unterschied zwischen den Verhältnissen, in denen die Daten generiert werden, zum Beispiel durch Proband:innen an einer Universität, wo für die teilnehmenden Personen kein Risiko besteht, wenn die „Lüge“ nicht geglaubt wird, und der realen Situation während der Einvernahme an der Grenze, die ohnehin schon massiven Stress auslösen kann, unabhängig davon, ob eine Täuschungsabsicht besteht oder nicht.

Sind die Grundannahmen einer KI-Anwendung falsch, wird diese das Problem, für das sie entwickelt wurde, nicht lösen können. Das heißt: Auch wenn KI noch so gut Gesichtsausdrücke erkennen und kategorisieren kann, würde sie, wenn Gesichtsausdrücke nichts über die Emotion oder die Emotion nichts über Lügen- oder Täuschungsabsicht aussagen, als Lügendetektor versagen. Bei der Entwicklung einer solchen Anwendung müssten also auch die Annahmen, auf denen sie beruht, explizit gemacht und bewiesen werden.

Eine weitere Schwierigkeit stellt die Evaluierung dar. Systeme, die Ergebnisse erzielen, die mit anderen Methoden nicht erzielt werden können, können kaum evaluiert werden. Schließlich kann immer noch nicht nachgewiesen werden, wer gelogen hat und wer nicht. Stützt sich ein Gericht allein oder vor allem auf das Ergebnis eines solchen Lügende-

tektors, bestätigt es nur dessen Ergebnis. Eine Aussage darüber, ob das Ergebnis korrekt war oder nicht, lässt sich daraus nicht ableiten.

Der wissenschaftliche Standard der Falsifizierbarkeit muss auch für KI gelten. Es sollte einen Mechanismus geben, um festzustellen, ob die KI das Problem der realen Welt, für das sie eingesetzt wird, löst, oder ob ihre Antworten falsch sind. In vielen Bereichen der Vorhersage, wie bei Predictive Policing oder bei Risikovorhersagen gibt es diese Kontrollmöglichkeiten nicht, weil die Tools die Endergebnisse stark beeinflussen und dadurch wie selbsterfüllende Prophezeiungen funktionieren.

Es wird deutlich, dass die Lösungsansätze sich oft an den Fähigkeiten von KI orientieren, anstatt an den Erfordernissen der realen Probleme. Das kann zum Beispiel bedeuten, dass statt der benötigten, die verfügbaren oder leichter zu beschaffenden Daten verwendet werden. Eine sinnvolle Nutzung von KI erfordert eine engere Zusammenarbeit von Entwickler:innen und Wissenschaftler:innen, die Expertise über die Einsatzgebiete der KI haben, seien es Jurist:innen, Sozialwissenschaftler:innen, Psycholog:innen, oder auch Mediziner:innen, Naturwissenschaftler:innen u.a.

Wir müssen achtsam sein, KI nicht für Zwecke einzusetzen, zu denen sie nicht geeignet ist. Die Grundannahmen, auf denen die einzelnen Anwendungen beruhen, müssen überprüfbar und richtig sein. Wir müssen lernen, diese Grenzen des Einsatzes von KI zu erkennen, sowohl in der Entwicklungsphase, als auch bei ihrer Implementierung. Und was KI niemals können wird, ist, Werteentscheidungen, Demokratie und Politik zu ersetzen, ebensowenig wie das Wissen über die Welt, das wir durch wissenschaftliche Verfahren erlangen. <

¹) Lisa Feldman Barrett et al., *Emotional Expressions Reconsidered: Challenges to Inferring Emotion From Human Facial Movements*, *Psychological Science in the Public Interest* 20:1, 2019, 1–68.

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Mediating Climate Voices for a Sustainable Agenda

BY TENDAI GANDURI

Zimbabwe presents a striking contrast in how climate change is discussed. Political narratives dominate the online discourse. Offline, particularly at the local community level, the focus is on ecological impacts on agriculture and land. There is a need to bridge this gap while addressing practical approaches toward sustainable futures in Zimbabwe's disaster-prone rural communities.

The contestations over land in Zimbabwe reveal deep-seated tensions between economic development, political power, and environmental sustainability. Online communities, shaped by political reflections and broader economic considerations, largely focus on criticizing the government's political and economic decisions. Offline communities, informed by direct experiences with climate disasters, prioritize sustainable land-management approaches. These differing perspectives highlight the need for more inclusive and participatory approaches to climate governance that consider the diverse needs and realities of different stakeholders. Mediating between online and offline voices can yield potential for both sides.

Zimbabweans actively participate in global conversations around the Conference of the Parties (COP) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and around local disasters. The Zimbabwean X (formerly Twitter)-sphere shows distrust of the highly selective political response to climate issues. Online satire of the country's delegations to COP events exemplifies this. Critics argue that these costly trips divert funds from more urgent domestic needs such as healthcare. The conversations often extend to broader global debates; for instance, around COP-endorsed carbon-credit deals. These arrangements, termed "mega deals" by Zimbabweans, are often met with scorn and deep mistrust. The United Arab Emirates' land agreement with four African countries, including Zimbabwe, which was publicized ahead of COP 28, epitomizes these contestations. Online critics view such deals as a reflection of the government's desperation for global re-engagement after years of economic and political isolation due to sanctions. The discussion is fuelled by concerns over governmental incompetence and corruption, with many fearing that the proceeds will be misused, leaving affected communities neglected. It also covers how land set aside for carbon-credit projects could have been utilized for developmental purposes including infrastructure for industry, which is crucial for the country. The feeling is one of squandering the opportunity in order to create further development opportunities for already rich investors in the carbon credits market. The charges of incompetence, cor-



Farmers inspect their crop after the area was hit by cyclone Idai in Chimanimani, Manicaland Province, Zimbabwe, March 17, 2019.

ruption, and opportunism are then compounded by issues like the carbon tax that Zimbabwe introduced in 2001. This generates substantial revenue but there are widespread concerns about its allocation. The challenge lies in the government's consolidated-fund system where climate-specific revenues are absorbed into a general pool, from which other expenses such as public salaries are often prioritized. There have been calls for instruments, like a Climate Change Act, that would ring-fence climate-related revenues.

In 2019, the community in Chimanimani was devastated by Cyclone Idai, which caused unprecedented damage. Offline, it demonstrates a strong preference for reforestation, informed by its lived experiences. Locals refer to an earlier fast-track land reform program initiated by the government in 2000 as "land for justice," in line with debates that recognize the ethical implications of the initiative in addressing colonial legacies and neo-colonial dynamics. However, the program's implementation faced challenges, leading to economic failures and environmental degradation, particularly the transformation of prime timber production areas into cropland. This aligns with evidence that such land-cover changes contribute to global environmental shifts, negatively impacting climate, water resources, terrestrial carbon reserves, and biodiversity. There was a signif-

icant decline in forest land cover in Chimanimani, from 406.08 hectares in 2000 to 208.89 hectares in 2013, paralleled by an increase in cropland.¹ After Cyclone Idai, there was an increase in tree-planting initiatives, reflecting community support for reforestation. The community's belief in the protective role of forests is strong as it associates the decline in tree cover with the severity of climate impacts. Locals note that, while excessive rains are not uncommon, a greater tree presence could have mitigated soil erosion and reduced mudslides during Cyclone Idai. All this resonates with broader environmental challenges. Overall, the community's enhanced sense of responsibility for preserving natural forests is shaped by its experiences with Cyclone Idai, fostering a commitment to reforestation as a means of addressing environmental and climatic concerns.

At the same time, the Chimanimani community's offline conversations reflect the ongoing need for crop farming. Subsistence farming is one of the most common sources of economic activity for this small town and its surrounding rural community. In response to this reality, some locals suggest using the most suitable land for agriculture and allowing mountain vegetation to regenerate. We can draw from such insights in the debates around a mix of green growth and degrowth approaches to sustainable climate so-

lutions. In this argument, the focus is on technology. Technological advancements offer a significant opportunity to accelerate green growth in agriculture; for instance, by integrating digital tools, renewable energy, and precision-farming technologies with traditional practices. In respect of degrowth, the debate is on reducing household farming areas. While the argument has Eurocentric foundations constructed around challenges of capitalism, over-consumption, and over-production, these do not accurately apply to the context discussed here. The reduction of cultivated spaces intersects with the gains green farming technologies can also bring. Among benefits of this merged approach, there is an opportunity for natural land restoration through traditional crop rotation and fallowing strategies. This provides an opportunity for focused investment in farming models tailored to community-specific contexts, promoting productivity and sustainability at impactful micro levels. Another key benefit would be a decrease in the energy and time community members spend working in the fields, thereby allowing more time for other economic activities and rest.

There can be a context-specific, technologically infused agricultural approach to address political and economic concerns on one hand and ecological and agricultural needs on the other. By reduc-

ing farming spaces and integrating technology, the solution balances the developmental needs expressed online with the ecological wellbeing prioritized offline, offering a pathway that responds to both perspectives and harmonizes political and ecological demands.

As with any other system, initial support is essential for this model to succeed. Its impact on the economy could be significant as the effective application of each approach has the potential to improve efficiency and production. In view of local communities' agricultural needs, ecological concerns, and natural-disaster experiences and management strategies, the application of a mixed approach with a focus on technological interventions and reduced farming spaces will yield many practical solutions on the ground and bridges communicative contests between online and offline voices about climate change. ◀

1) Nyelele, C., Murwira, A., and Dube, T. (2018). Understanding the impacts of human resettlement and projected land use dynamics in Chimanimani district of Zimbabwe. *Physics and Chemistry of the Earth, Parts A/B/C*, 106, 83–88. doi.org/10.1016/j.pce.2018.05.013

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Hydropower Capabilities: Doing Politics Through Infrastructure

BY DRAGAN ĐUNDA

In Serbia, the hydropower sector has been used strategically for managing external pressures, building alliances, and fostering domestic elites. This continues to shape, and will likely play a role in, future struggles over the region's environmental resources.

Extensive investments in small hydropower plants (SHPs) and the widespread protests against their detrimental socio-ecological effects marked the first wave, between 2009 and 2020, of the energy transition in Serbia. Despite its initial claims regarding sustainability and compliance with mandatory EU quotas, the government eventually cancelled new projects. The mushrooming of SHPs across the region was driven by international financing as well as by lucrative national subsidies for renewable energy. Yet, the initial purpose of the SHPs and of renewables in general was not only achieving sustainability of the sector. In the early stages of the transition, the introduction of SHPs had more to do with managing the liberalization of the state-controlled electricity market. In this context, liberalization entailed a complex package that aimed at removing state monopoly, reducing the state's role for the benefit of private investors, and removing price controls, among other measures. The result was a change in ownership structure without explicit privatization. Renewables had a central role in this and, as a candidate country, Serbia merely followed the EU's regulatory path.

However, liberalization has played out unevenly across the EU, even though its institutions prescribed this as a driver of the integration of fragmented national markets. The uneven realization was particularly apparent in the cases of Bulgaria and Romania, both recent member states. Under the dual pressure of EU conditionality and obsolete infrastructure, the two countries became the main investment destinations for incumbent companies from older member states, which sought opportunities to substitute for profits lost due to liberalization at home. They aimed to develop large renewable projects abroad because only subsidized renewable electricity could bring them significant and long-term gains. While older member states had greater flexibility to improvise and were able to partially carry out or even avoid liberalization, the latecomers had no choice but to comply fully and swiftly with the EU rules. Bulgaria and Romania therefore fully opened their electricity sectors to foreign investors. This dynamic resulted in the creation of EU-wide oligopolies and rising electrici-



The hydroelectric power station Bajina Bašta on the Lake Perućac and river Drina, Serbia.

Photo: Aleksandar Photography / Shutterstock.com

ty prices in the two countries, which led to citizens' disapproval, protests, and even the fall of the government in Sofia. Although praised for their rapid liberalization and decarbonization, both countries eventually halted new renewable-energy investments.

Serbian policymakers closely observed these developments in the neighboring countries, expecting similar obligations as a part of the EU accession process. My interviews with national policymakers revealed that the double transition of decarbonization via liberalization opened space for conflicts between different holders of capital, the state, and citizens. That is why I claim that SHPs were an attempt to address liberalization and these conflicts. While wind power was largely controlled by foreign investment funds, policymakers envisioned SHPs as an opportunity for carving out space for domestic capital in the sector. The economic and technical capabilities of SHPs were particularly suitable for that purpose. Hydropower was cheaper than new renewables because its technology was established, more rudimentary, and thus less costly, and there were experts available in the country. A large portion of the costs was for construction, and only one or a few plants were enough to make the business profitable. Economy of scale was therefore much less important than with large wind parks. Final-

ly, since SHPs were more dispersed, their effect on the grid was minimal, which meant that the necessary upgrade was more limited.

All these factors made SHPs an attractive option for the state and domestic capital. Yet, it would be too simplistic to think of this as a policy solution to reject the influence of external forces. Rather, it was a project for building a domestic capitalist base and aligning it with the political elite, while gradually opening the energy sector to foreign capital and complying with EU regulations.

Forging Regional Alliances Through Hydropower

A recent proposal for a joint venture between the Serbian public company EPS and its Hungarian counterpart MVM offers another perspective on using hydropower infrastructure, this time for regional integration. The plan envisioned that EPS would transfer ownership of 11 large Yugoslav-era hydropower plants to the new company. On the list was the "hydropower pearl": the Bajina Bašta reversible pumped storage. This plant is valuable because, in the absence of affordable and effective large battery storage, reversible plants remain the solution for storing electricity. They not only store energy but also help manage the variability of solar and wind power in a carbon-neutral way. The value

of such energy on the international market is significant. However, the EPS management rejected the proposal due to public criticism that a "silent privatization" was underway. The EPS management was soon "professionalized"—replaced by a board of foreign managers—and a similar proposal may appear, especially since Hungary recently joined a Serbian-Slovenian regional power-exchange platform.

This example illustrates how energy infrastructure fulfills multiple, sometimes even contradictory, purposes—reconciling diverging interests while appearing as a purely technical issue. The EPS-MVM proposal did not oppose the EU market model but rather built on it. It used the principle of regional market integration to forge a political alliance extending beyond technical cooperation and market exchange.

Novel Tendencies in Regional Energy Politics

Any claim of political novelty in the deployment of the hydropower sector as described above is questionable given the long history of socialist cooperation and nonalignment that relied on Yugoslav energy infrastructure. Yet, some new tendencies are hard to ignore.

The two cases looked at suggest that there might be a growing permeability between liberal governance

and state roles, with authoritarian regimes coopting a liberal policy repertoire to strengthen themselves, as seen with SHPs. The domestic capitalist base developed over the last decade might play a key mediating role in such an arrangement, linking the state with key international actors and channeling resources between them.

Another tendency is the institutionalization and solidification of the regional scale as a type of geopolitical sub-grouping. This regional approach is based not only on proximity (which is important for electricity infrastructure) but even more on political and economic agendas and on positioning "within-and-between" blocs. We can observe some attempts at such positioning by Hungary and Serbia. Unfortunately, this will likely be predicated on a constant search for stakes and resources that will produce new sorts of dispossession, violence, and control. As the importance of labor, carbon-neutral energy, and raw materials increases in geopolitics, Serbia's regime will likely employ them to make a place for itself "within-and-between" geopolitical rivals. ◀

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Die ukrainische Hungerkrise von 1933 und Österreich

VON OLA HNATIUK

Vor dem Hintergrund der Hungersnot in der Ukraine in den 1930er Jahren ist auf dem Altar der österreichisch-sowjetischen Beziehungen viel geopfert worden. Die Geschichte dieser Beziehungen ist noch nicht geschrieben.

Der Frühling 1933 verhielt in Österreich nichts Gutes: Nach der Parlamentskrise im März 1933 kam es zum Zusammenbruch des demokratischen Systems und dem Beginn einer Ära des Autoritarismus. Nach der Ernennung Hitlers zum Reichskanzler und dem Reichstagsbrand war es nur eine Frage der Zeit bis Österreichs nationalsozialistische Opposition Rückenwind für eine Vereinigung mit dem Reich erhalten würde.

Das Jahr 1933 war für die Sowjetunion gleichermaßen einschneidend, und zwar sowohl außenpolitisch (man denke an die Aufnahme diplomatischer Beziehungen mit den USA) als auch im Bereich der Innenpolitik. Im Januar verkündete Stalin den großen wirtschaftlichen Erfolg des Fünfjahresplans 1928–1933: Während die Welt weiterhin von der Wirtschaftskrise angeschlagen war, würde die Sowjetunion immer stärker. Und die Welt glaubte an dieses vermeintliche Wunder.

In Wirklichkeit vollzog sich in der UdSSR kein Wunder. Entgegen einer bis heute verbreiteten Überzeugung lässt sich die damalige Entwicklung weniger mit „Industrialisierung“ oder „Modernisierung“ und vielmehr mit „Militarisierung“ umschreiben. Zur selben Zeit wurde die Kollektivierung durchgesetzt, welche die Bauern in den fruchtbarsten Regionen der UdSSR – nämlich in der Ukraine, dem Kuban-Gebiet und der Autonomen Republik der Wolgadeutschen – am schlimmsten zu spüren bekamen. Die Kollektivierung hatte gerade dort verheerende Auswirkungen, weil sie eine restriktive Regierungspolitik (Entkulakisierung) mit Repressionen gegenüber Nationalitäten, welche als Feinde des Regimes eingestuft wurden, verband. Im Einklang mit Stalins längerfristigen Kriegsvorbereitungen sollten die westlichen Gebiete der UdSSR, allen voran die Ukraine, als sicheres Hinterland fungieren. Kurzfristiges Ziel war die Gewinnung von möglichst viel Getreide für den Export, d.h. für die Sicherung von Devisen, die für die Weiterführung der „Industrialisierung“ unerlässlich waren, sowie für den „internen Export“, d.h. die Drainage von Kolonieressourcen und deren Überführung in Industriegebiete in den Tiefen Russlands. Sorgfältig geheim gehalten war dabei die Ausschaltung der potenziellen Bedrohung, die die ukrainische Bauernschaft und die Bevölkerung der Wolgadeutschen für diese Pläne bedeutete. Dazu wurde eine künstliche Hungersnot herbeigeführt, wel-



Kardinal Theodor Innitzer, 1932.

cher allein in der Ukraine nicht weniger als vier Millionen Menschen zum Opfer fielen. Im Frühling 1933 erreichte die Hungerkrise ihren Höhepunkt. Die Regierung verhängte eine Sperre der von Hunger betroffenen Regionen und schloss die Binnengrenzen der sowjetischen Ukraine, so dass Bauern nicht ausreisen konnten.

Obwohl die Welt über die Hungerkrise ausreichend informiert war, ließ eine Reaktion auf sich warten. Als Hauptbedrohung für den Frieden galt nämlich Hitlers Machtergreifung. Die UdSSR wurde als potenzielles Gegengewicht zum Dritten Reich gesehen. Es gab auch einen ökonomischen Beweggrund: die verlockende Perspektive einer wirtschaftlichen Zusammenarbeit mit Russland. Wie sich kaum einige Jahre später herausstellen sollte, war das ein schwerwiegender Fehler, welcher zig Millionen Menschenleben kostete.

1933 diagnostizierte Olgierd Hipolit Boczkowski, ein in Prag lebender ukrainischer Soziologe, politischer Publizist und sozialistischer Aktivist, Bolschewismus und Faschismus seien siamesische Zwillinge. Ein Jahr später kommentierte er die Reaktion der Weltöffentlichkeit auf die sowjetische Vernichtungspolitik gegen die eigene Bevölkerung mit den Worten: „Die Welt war über die Hungerkatastrophe in der Sowjetunion gut informiert. Es ist eine andere Sache, dass sie auf diese Katastrophe nicht reagierte, dass sie der

massenhaft an Hunger sterbenden Bevölkerung auf der anderen Seite der sowjetischen Grenze nicht zur Hilfe kam“. 1936 bezeichnete er das Dreieck „Moskau – Rom – Berlin“ als größte Bedrohung für den Frieden in Europa und auf der Welt.

Es ist nicht weiter verwunderlich, dass es Menschen aus der Ukraine waren, die vor einer Verbindung zwischen Faschismus und Bolschewismus warnten. Die Hungerkatastrophe war eine existenzielle Bedrohung für ihre Brüder und Schwestern in der sowjetischen Ukraine. Im Gegenzug bezichtigte die sowjetische Regierung sie der Zusammenarbeit mit Hitler. Die Weltöffentlichkeit wurde in diesem Glauben bestärkt, weil es der einfachste Weg war, die Aufmerksamkeit von den sowjetischen Gräueltaten abzulenken. Er erwies sich als erfolgreich.

Die Politik Österreichs, welches seine Unabhängigkeit von Deutschland zu wahren suchte, war keine Ausnahme vom weltweiten Trend, der gute Beziehungen zu der UdSSR priorisierte. Und dies geschah trotz des Bündnisses Österreichs mit dem faschistischen Italien und der Gefahr, welche die Unterstützung der österreichischen Kommunisten seitens der UdSSR bedeutete. Bald sollte die Pflege dieser Verbindungen die Beziehungen mit den kirchlichen Autoritäten in Österreich auf die Probe stellen.

Im Sommer 1933 wandte sich der griechisch-katholische Großbischof von Lemberg, Metropolit An-



drej Scheptyzkyj, an den Erzbischof von Wien, Kardinal Theodor Innitzer. Im Hirtenbrief „Ukraine in Todeskrämpfen“ rief er die Gläubigen und die christliche Welt auf, der an Hunger sterbenden Bevölkerung der sowjetischen Ukraine Hilfe zu leisten. Einige Tage später wurde der Brief von der *Reichspost*, der größten katholischen, Regierungskreisen nahestehenden Zeitschrift Österreichs, abgedruckt.

Daraufhin appellierte Kardinal Innitzer – im Einvernehmen mit dem Heiligen Stuhl – um Bereitstellung internationaler Hilfe für die Hungernden. Der Appell wurde von den einflussreichsten Zeitungen der Welt abgedruckt. Im Herbst rief Innitzer das Interkonfessionelle und Internationale Hilfskomitee für die Hungergebiete in der Sowjetunion ins Leben und ordnete eine Tagung aller Hilfsorganisationen an. Zum Ehrensekretär des Komitees wurde Ewald Ammende, ein in Wien ansässiger Baltendeutscher, Mitbegründer und Generalsekretär des Europäischen Nationalitätenkongresses, ernannt. Ammende besaß große organisatorische Erfahrung. 1921–1923 hatte er die Hilfsmaßnahmen für Hungerleidende in Russland koordiniert.

Die sowjetische Regierung reagierte prompt: Der sowjetische Botschafter in Wien intervenierte, und auch der österreichische Botschafter in Moskau wurde zitiert. Die sowjetische Presse verneinte die Existenz einer Hungerkrise und griff die Organisatoren der Katastrophenhilfe an. Im Visier befand sich anfangs Ammende: Er wurde als Instrument deutscher Propaganda diffamiert. Zugleich wurde Österreich auf eine Stufe mit dem Dritten Reich gestellt. Kardinal Innitzer kam eher glimpflich davon und wurde „nur“ als „Pfaffe“ bezeichnet.

Die Reaktion der österreichischen Behörden war leicht vorhersehbar: Um der guten Beziehungen

zur UdSSR willen wurde beschlossen, Kardinal Innitzer aufzuhalten. Aufgrund der Autorität der Kirche geschah dies auf Umwegen. Der österreichische Botschafter in Rom wurde gebeten, sich mit dem Kardinal zu treffen. Innitzer kam im Herbst 1933 in den Vatikan, u.a. um dem Papst die Aktivitäten des Komitees vorzustellen. Der Botschafter setzte den Kardinal über die vermeintlichen Verbindungen von Ammende zu Goebbels in Kenntnis und erbot sich das Versprechen, während des Treffens mit dem Papst die Hilfe für die Hungerleidenden nicht zu erörtern. Auf diese Weise wurde einerseits der Handlungsspielraum des Komitees auf internationaler Ebene geschmälert und andererseits Ammendes Ruf geschädigt.

Die sowjetische Regierung hatte ihr Ziel beinahe erreicht. Da es ihr allerdings nicht gelungen war, das Komitee gänzlich zu lähmen, bediente sie sich in den folgenden zwei Jahren bewährter Methoden: Kompromittierung und Erpressung. Die sowjetische Presse beschuldigte Innitzer, ein „Geldeintreiber Vatikans“ zu sein, und behauptete, die vom Komitee für die Hungerleidenden in der UdSSR gesammelten Mittel würden in Wirklichkeit die Bedürfnisse des Klerus befriedigen. Ammende wurde mit vermeintlichen homosexuellen Beziehungen – einer zu jener Zeit strafbaren Handlung – erpresst. Er verstarb unerwartet im Frühling 1936, einige Monate nach der Veröffentlichung seines Buches über die Ursachen der Hungersnot, die von den sowjetischen Behörden gelehrt wurde und in der Weltöffentlichkeit keine Beachtung fand. Die Umstände seines Todes ähnelten jenen von Gareth Jones, einem britischen Journalisten, dessen Reportagen über die hungernde Ukraine es für die Sowjets erschwerten, die Hungersnot als „faschistische Propaganda“ darzustellen.

Während Kardinal Innitzer überlebte, um von den Völkern der Welt als Gerechter verehrt zu werden, konnte Ammende seinen Ruf nicht wiederherstellen. Über die österreichisch-sowjetischen Beziehungen, für welche man nicht nur das Ansehen des Kardinals opferte, wurde bislang noch nicht berichtet. <

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Meine Großmutter, das Judentum und die Orthodoxie

VON ANNA NARINSKAYA

Die Sowjetunion gehörte zu jenen seltenen Orten, an welchen orthodox getaufte Juden keine einzige ihrer Identitäten verloren – sie fühlten sich sowohl als Juden als auch als Christen. Am deutlichsten kam dies zur Zeit der sogenannten Stagnation zum Vorschein, als die Taufe zu einem Trend unter der jüdischen Intelligenz wurde. Will man dieses Phänomen verstehen, muss man wenigstens eine Generation zurückschauen.

Wenn ich die Augen schließe und versuche, mir meine Großmutter Ruscha vorzustellen, denke ich zunächst an die erloschene Papirossa „Belomorkanal“ (das stärkste, geruchsintensivste und billigste sowjetische Tabakerzeugnis, benannt nach dem berühmten stalinistischen Bauvorhaben, welches Zehntausende von Häftlingen das Leben kostete), dann an die sie haltenden dunklen Finger mit kurzen Fingernägeln; den über einem Buch geneigten Kopf mit einer großen und schönen, wenn auch hakenförmigen Nase; das karierte Taschentuch, welches aus der Tasche eines flauschigen (des sogenannten schlechtesten) Morgenmantels hervorsticht. Der sogenannte beste wurde für den „Krankenhausfall“ aufgehoben.

„Solltest du nämlich plötzlich und unvorbereitet im Krankenhaus landen, trägst du nur noch Krankenhauskleidung, etwas Graues, mit Stempeln“, sagte sie und fügte hinzu: „wie im Gefängnis“. Daher wurde alles „Anständige“, wie sie es bezeichnete – Unterwäsche, Strümpfe sowie jener Morgenmantel – beiseitegelegt und auf einem separaten, unantastbaren Stapel aufbewahrt. Gelegentlich überprüfte sie ihn und schichtete etwas um.

Als Großmutter einen Herzinfarkt erlitt und eiligst von einem Krankenwagen abtransportiert wurde, hat man es nicht geschafft, ihr etwas „Anständiges“ anzuziehen.

Am nächsten Tag stand ich vor der Tür der Intensivstation. Heraus kam ein Krankenpfleger von schier ungeheurer, furchteinflößender Größe. Ich reichte ihm die Tüte mit den „anständigen“ Sachen sowie einen gefalteten Zwanzig-Dollar-Schein, was zu Zeiten der Perestrojka ein durchschnittliches Schmiergeld war. „Für Narinskaya?“, fragte er, „eine kleine jüdische alte Dame wie diese?“ Ich nickte. Unter dem kurzen Ärmel seiner Uniform war auf dem riesigen Bizeps eine leicht verwischte tätowierte Fledermaus zu sehen. Ich wusste, dass Tätowierungen dieser Art von denen gemacht wurden, die in Afghanistan gekämpft hatten.

Großmutter starb noch in derselben Nacht. Im Sarg trug sie ein unbekanntes Hemd mit Perlmutterknöpfen. Im Gegensatz zu einem Krankenhausaufenthalt hatte sie sich nie auf ihre eigene Beerdigung vorbereitet. In dem besten Morgenmantel habe ich sie also nicht gesehen – nur in dem schlechtesten. Wenn sich



Die Familie der Autorin (Mutter, jüngerer Bruder und die zwei Großmütter) vor ihrem Wohnblock in Moskau im Jahr 1973. Rachel ist ganz rechts zu sehen.

Großmutter vorbeugte, fiel aus dem offenen Kragen dieses alten Mantels ein kleines, an einer Kette hängendes eisernes Kreuz.

Dieses Kreuz hat Ruscha überhaupt nicht davon abgehalten, immer wieder ihr Judentum zu bekunden. Auf fast alle wichtigen Nachrichten reagierte sie mit der Frage: „Und welche Folgen wird das für die Juden haben?“ Genau diese Frage stellte sie mir auch, als Gorbatschow Glasnost einleitete. Befremdet von meiner, wie sie meinte, respektlosen Haltung gegenüber ihren Wurzeln, sagte sie, die Lippen aufeinanderpressend und die erloschene Papirossa schwingend: „Du bist keine Jüdin, nein, du bist die Parodie einer Jüdin.“

Die Geschichte ihrer Taufe gab sie folgendermaßen wieder.

Es geschah, als sie zehn Jahre alt war (also 1911) in Odessa, wo sie mit ihrer Mutter und der älteren Schwester lebte. Die Schwester arbeitete in einem Modegeschäft, arrangierte Schuhe und Hüte im Schaufenster. Eines Tages verliebte sich – auf den ersten, durch das Schaufenster gerichteten Blick – ein reicher und „vollkommen russischer“ (ich zitiere Großmutter) Mann in ihre Schwester. Er besaß eine Fabrik und Villa am Schwarzen Meer.

Die Schwester zog in die Villa, nahm Ruscha mit, und dann, als sie eigene Töchter bekommen hatte und es Zeit für ihre Taufe war, wurde gleichzeitig ihre minderjährige Tante orthodox getauft. Im Zuge der Taufe wurde ihr biblischer Name Rachel durch Raisa ersetzt, einen Namen aus den orthodoxen Heiligenbüchern.

Den Namen Raisa hasste sie leidenschaftlich und benutzte ihn nicht einmal während der spätstalinistischen Judenverfolgungen, als aus einem Gefühl der Selbsterhaltung heraus Baruchs zu Borissen und Sarahs zu Sophien wurden. Ihr kleines Kreuz hat sie allerdings zu keinem Zeitpunkt abgelegt – nicht einmal dann, als Religion als „Opium des Volkes“ bezeichnet wurde, orthodoxe Kirchen zerstört und Priester in Lager gesteckt wurden.

Sobald ich alt genug war, um eine skeptische Haltung gegenüber den Dingen einzunehmen, begann ich, diese Version von Großmutter Taufe sowie die ganze Liebesgeschichte zwischen einem russischen Kapitalisten und einer jüdischen Angestellten anzuzweifeln. Ich dachte, sie wollte einfach nicht eingestehen, dass die Taufe ein wohlüberlegter Schritt in Richtung eines komfortableren Lebens gewesen war, hob doch die Taufe im vorrevolutionären Russland erniedrigende Einschränkungen für Juden auf, z.B. das Verbot, in Großstädten zu leben und an Universitäten zu studieren. Und auch, dass die Geschichte der Liebe, der Villa, aber auch der darauffolgenden Abreise der Schwester und ihrer Familie nach Europa auf einem Schiff der Entente eine Phantasmagorie war, inspiriert von einer Vorliebe für französische Romane.

35 Jahre nach Ruschas Tod, nach dem Tod ihrer Tochter, also meiner Mutter, und praktisch nach dem Tod aller, die mich als Kind umgaben, stieß ich in den Kisten meines Familienarchivs auf einen auf Französisch verfassten Brief.

Er war kurz nach Stalins Tod geschrieben worden. Es war eine von Ruschas Nichten, die aus Paris schrieb und indirekt all das bestätigte, woran ich nicht geglaubt hatte: den Fabrikbesitzer, das Modegeschäft, das Leben in einer Villa, die Evakuierung mit der Entente.

Es stand außer Frage, dass es der erste Brief nach einer sehr langen Pause war. Den Brief machen größtenteils Erinnerungen über das Leben in Odessa aus: Spaziergänge mit Freundinnen an der Meerespromenade, ein Treffen mit dem berühmt-berüchtigten Odessaer Gauner Mischka Japontschik.

Vermutlich hat Ruscha diesen Brief unbeantwortet gelassen. Wie viele Menschen in der Sowjetunion war sie sehr vorsichtig mit Briefen ins Ausland und mit Briefen allgemein. Selbst zur Zeit der mehr oder weniger entspannten Stagnation steckte sie ein Haar in Briefumschläge. Falls der Empfänger das Haar nicht vorfand, war der Brief geöffnet und auf staatsfeindliche Inhalte überprüft worden. Sie davon zu überzeugen, dass das Haar einfach herausgefallen sein könnte, war unmöglich.

Ich habe Ruscha oft in ihrer winzigen Wohnung in Moskowskije Wysielki besucht. Sie lebte dort mit ihrem älteren Sohn, meinem Onkel Julja.

Julja war ein alter Junggeselle. Zuhause ging er in einem gestreiften Pyjama herum, hörte Schallplatten mit Aufnahmen italienischer Opern und sang laut dazu. Einst war er ein vielversprechender Physiker gewesen, brachte es aber aus irgendeinem Grund nur zu einem Schullehrer. Wenn er gerade nicht unterrichtete oder sich Arien anhörte, schrieb er etwas in kleine Hefte mit weichen Umschlägen. Nun sind diese Hefchen bei mir. In ihnen wird auf vielen Seiten mit physikalischen Gleichungen, langen Berechnungen und mit Bleistift gezeichneten Schemen die Existenz Gottes wissenschaftlich belegt.

Ich erinnere mich (es war in den frühen 1980er-Jahren), wie Onkel Julja zum ersten Mal davon sprach, nach Israel auswandern zu wollen. Damals fuhren viele weg; im Freundeskreis meiner Eltern waren mehr

ausgereist als geblieben. Juljas Vorhaben wurde in der Familie jedoch sehr unruhig diskutiert.

Eines Tages verschwand er. Spurlos. Er wurde zur Fahndung ausgeschrieben, und Mutter fuhr einige Male zur Polizei, um Leichen zu identifizieren. Und jedes Mal war er es nicht. Schließlich wurde er als vermisst gemeldet, und Ruscha zog bei uns ein.

Später erfuhr ich, dass er sicher war, nicht nach Israel ausreisen zu dürfen, da er in seiner Zeit als Physiker an einem Projekt mit einer Bombe beteiligt war. Leute, die Verbindungen zu geheimen Projekten hatten, wurden nicht aus der Sowjetunion herausgelassen. Einmal sagte er zu Großmutter und Mutter, er habe endlich jemanden gefunden, der bereit wäre, ihn nach Israel zu bringen, illegal natürlich, mit gefälschten Papieren. Man müsse nur bezahlen, die benötigte Summe habe er bereits aufgetrieben.

Manchmal denke ich, dass es vielleicht nicht das ist, wonach es aussieht: Er wurde nicht einfach so ermordet und seines Geldes beraubt, sondern tatsächlich nach Israel gebracht. Und er lebte dort jenes neue lange Leben, welches er sich erträumt hatte, und schrieb zahlreiche weitere Hefchen voll. Selten denke ich aber so.

Ich habe mit Ruscha nie darüber gesprochen, was mit ihm geschehen ist.

Jetzt ist mir bewusst, dass ich schrecklich wenig – nein, viel mehr furchtbar schlecht und oberflächlich – mit ihr gesprochen habe.

Ich habe sie, zum Beispiel, niemals gefragt, wie sich ihr Kreuz mit dem stets bekundeten Judentum verhalten lässt.

Wollte sie ihre Vergangenheit, möge sie von außen noch so widersprüchlich wirken, nicht verleugnen?

Kann es sein, dass sie weder das eine noch das andere abschwören wollte, weil es bedeuten würde, die sowjetische Macht zu akzeptieren? Wenn sie es schon nicht wagte, sich ihr zu widersetzen, könnte sie sich ihr wenigstens nicht unterwerfen?

Hat sie etwa darin keinen Konflikt gesehen?

Jetzt kann ich mir eine beliebige Antwort aussuchen.

Oder all diese Antworten. <

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“Memoir Fever” in 20th Century Poland

BY ŁUKASZ KIELPIŃSKI

Throughout the 20th century, around 1,500 competitions for memoirs were organized in Poland. Their number and frequency, and the amount of gathered materials, make this “memoir fever” a unique phenomenon. However, the production of this abundance of written testimonies completely overshadowed the fact that memories could also be preserved on film.

A popular poststructuralist claim states that speaking in your own voice is the foundation of any emancipatory struggle. According to this idea, one becomes a subject who can influence public discourse by an act of public speech. Following this assumption, one could say that the 20th century not only brought unprecedented mass violence but also resulted in the mass emancipation of many different social groups. The spread of universal education resulted in the rapid growth of adult literacy, providing many with new forms of expression that led them to strive for a Hegelian recognition of the other. First, by learning how to read, people could dive deep into books. Novels especially had become a massive phenomenon in the 19th century, and they provided narrative formulas that showed how to put one’s experiences, thoughts, and feelings into a coherent whole. Once they learned how to write, people from marginalized groups could keep diaries to inscribe their own stories on paper. As a result, for the first time, one could access the detailed description of the lives of people operating in the discursive shadow. There was only one more thing to be done—someone needed to encourage people to keep journals, as this was far from a natural practice for many. Among those who took up this challenge were Polish sociologists.

It all started with *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America* by Florian Znaniecki and William I. Thomas, published in five volumes between 1918 and 1920. This study by one Polish and one American sociologist was based on an extensive collection of diaries, letters, and other personal documents of Polish peasants who emigrated to the United States at the turn of the 20th century. Though it was not recognized as important right away, it established a new method in sociology called “biographical research” or “personal documents method.” This aims to reconstruct life histories by drawing on (auto)biographical narratives and documents. When Znaniecki returned to Poland, he founded the Polish Sociological Institute in Poznań and began the tradition of organizing competitions for memoirs. The first one was “for the best biography of a worker written by himself,” organized in 1922. This competition attracted 161 submissions and the organizing committee had to increase



Residents of Gródek Jagielloński and surrounding areas, 1934.

the number of awards from two to 25.¹ Thus, slightly over 100 years ago, Polish “memoir fever” started.

Throughout the interwar period, dozens of competitions for memoirs took place, targeting various social groups, such as peasants, the unemployed, rural and Jewish youth, and migrants. One of the most famous, organized in 1933, was for peasants. Almost 500 memoirs were submitted and 61 published. Out of many heartbreaking and touching testimonies, I would like to draw attention to one of the very few submitted by a woman. It is a moving memoir signed tellingly by “the wife of an eleven-acre owner in the Warsaw district.” The diary told the story of a woman whose life had been filled with violence, exhaustion, and despair. She concluded it with a poignant declaration: “I don’t want a reward, but just a bit of sympathy. For, truly, there is probably no more forgotten and unappreciated being in the world than a peasant wom-

an, and most of all here, in Poland.”² However, despite all the suffering, she proudly declared that “today’s woman in the countryside is a quiet heroine, full of merits for which no order is enough.” She added: “If I were a well-educated woman, I would write a whole huge work on the misery of the rural woman, but unfortunately, I am just such an ordinary, average rural woman.”³ One could consider the author a true feminist pioneer as her testimony was also a vital emancipatory manifesto: “We, rural women, on whose shoulders a huge burden of duty has fallen, a hundred times heavier than on men, we demand our rights! We demand an improvement of our fate, we cry out for relief!”⁴ These words resonate strongly even today, showing the misery of an ordinary Eastern European woman from less than a century ago.

Competitions for memoirs continued to be organized in Poland even under the Nazi occupation during

the Second World War. They resulted in, for example, many written testimonies of Jews from the Warsaw Ghetto, which are now part of the Ringelblum Archive. After the war, the biographical method in sociology was in full force: in 1969, a record number of 114 competitions for memoirs were organized.⁵ The tradition faced a crisis after 1989, as many public institutions ran out of money and struggled to survive. However, it continued in democratic and capitalist Poland. Recent examples include the “Competition for Pandemic Memoirs” and the “Competition for LGBTQIA+ Memoirs,” both organized in 2020.

While “memoir fever” in Poland was focusing on written journals, the phenomena of home movies spread around the world. In the 1950s and 1960s, the invention of light cameras allowed amateur recording of scenes from everyday life. This contributed to the emergence of a new “film diary” genre established by Jonas

Mekas, a Lithuanian emigrant who came to the United States. In 1969, he premiered his first film diary, *Walden: Diaries, Notes and Sketches*. By combining the recorded images with an off-screen commentary, Mekas decided to tell the story of his life marked by forced emigration. A similar idea occurred to Marian Marzyński, a Polish Jew who left his homeland in 1969 as a result of the anti-Semitic campaign that began there in March 1968. Immediately after leaving, he started using a camera to make autobiographical film documentaries. The first one, *Skibet*, was made in 1969, the same year Mekas premiered *Walden*. Exile was a trigger that made both men turn their cameras on themselves.

However, we know about Marzyński as the first one from Poland to start something we could call film diaries because he sold them to American and Danish TV stations, which showed them to the public. There are probably thousands of home videos hidden in private archives around the world that make up a priceless collection of archives of ordinariness. But, just like written memoirs in Poland earlier, home videos and film diaries are about to receive recognition as a sociological source within a biographical method. Some attempts toward this are already being made, thanks to initiatives such as the Not-So-Ordinary project led by Agata Zborowska at the University of Chicago. She is creating a unique and vast archive of home videos made by Polish emigrants in the United States. A century after the University of Chicago published Znaniecki and Thomas’s classic, a similar study is being conducted in the same institution based on filmed testimonies. It seems like Polish “memoir fever” has just entered a new stage, in which visually preserved memories are finally given consideration. ◀

1) Paweł Rodak, *Zapomniana epopeja. Polskie konkursy pamiętnikarskie i literatura*, “Teksty Drugie” 2024, no. 2, p. 21.

2) *Pamiętniki chłopów*, Instytut Gospodarstwa Społecznego, Warsaw 1935, p. 42.

3) *Ibid.*, p. 28.

4) *Ibid.*, p. 29.

5) *Wykaz konkursów na pamiętniki w Polsce w latach 1921–1979*. In: *Pamiętniki Polaków 1918–1978. Antologia pamiętnikarstwa polskiego*, vol. 3, Ludowa Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza, Warsaw 1983.

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Galicia: A Forgotten Cradle of Sexual Modernity

BY MICHAŁ NAROŹNIAK

The genealogy of the cultural theory of sexuality might come as a surprise. In significant part, the West owes it to Jews, Poles, Ukrainians, and Germans from the Habsburg backwater of Galicia. The way to understand the region's role is not by venturing a claim about its metropolitan character but by revealing the potential in a periphery.

Balancing between culture and nature organizes interpretations of gender and sexuality in the Western world. In whatever way we identify when it comes to our sexuality, we are primarily either “born this way” or a product of social construction. But neither natural nor cultural theories of sexuality are exclusive paths for social justice and emancipation. For instance, one could claim that same-sex desire is a natural phenomenon, observed in many species, and thus should not be subject to repression. Alternatively, a proponent of cultural interpretations could point to the diversity of understandings of same-sex desires in various civilizations. The study of this diversity gives us the ability to consciously shape our own identity, avoiding a level determinism inherent to the biological outlook. It is the cultural lens that may swiftly induce innovation in personal and public approaches to sexuality.

In fin de siècle Europe, the development of the cultural theory of sexuality was quite a breakthrough. Together with similar voluntaristic approaches, its appearance signified the end of scientific positivism and the ascension of the modernist era. The cultural theory of sexuality came from the margins to undermine the racial and biologist hegemony in mainstream European understandings of gender and sexuality. This former outlook and the scientific communities that applied it were very hesitant to include persons from marginalized communities: queers, Jews, and members of Slavic peasant nations. In Galicia, a Habsburg borderland, these three groups were represented significantly. Many of their members moved to Vienna, contributing to the city's golden age of cultural and scientific production. Others migrated to the United States and played a significant role in forming the fantasies of Hollywood. Some stayed in Galicia and—as novelists, playwrights, physicians, or ethnographers—productively applied the cultural outlook to understand the sexual aspects of the complex class and ethnic relations of the crown land.

The family of Sigmund Freud, with whom cultural analysis of sexuality will forever be associated, came from Galicia. First- and second-generation Galician migrants dominated the ranks of early psychoanalysis. Among them were Wilhelm Reich, a Freudo-Marxist who coined the



Wacław Szymanowski, *Hutsuls in Conversation* (1888).

term “sexual revolution,” Helene Deutsch, the first woman in the collective who defined the psychoanalytic understandings of motherhood, and Isidor Sadger, who established the concept of narcissism as we use it today. Furthermore, the Galician-born Bronisław Malinowski undertook a shift similar to Freud's in his discipline of anthropology. What if their Galician background mattered as much as their experience in the metropolises to the development of their innovations?

Galicia has always epitomized miserable parochialism. To this day, Poles from Warsaw and Ukrainians from Kyiv judge their Galician compatriots for provincial conservatism. In the Habsburg period, the Jewish-German author Karl Emil Franzos called Galicia a “Half-Asia” for its lack of proper civilizational development. The Polish novelist and playwright Gabriela Zapolska exposed the hypocrisy prevalent among Kraków

and Lviv's middle classes, shown in scenes of violent exploitation of domestic workers. By the late 19th century, nothing influenced ideas about Galicia's sexual norms more than “white slavery” debates. The nationalist press and law-enforcement agents assigned this name to the mass exodus of women for sex work to several destinations around the world. If we combine “white slavery” with “Half-Asia,” we do not get a mere periphery: this mix of orientalizing narratives and exploitation signified an attempt to colonize this land.

But a post-colonial critique of the Galician sexual regime cannot on its own explain the conditions that produced innovations in the theory of sexuality. To do so, it is necessary to see the region in its proximity to and distance from the West alike. Galicians felt the distinction between the metropolitan West and their homeland. But, unlike the colonized pop-

ulations in maritime empires, they did not experience an unpassable line of color and established racial apartheid. Galicians were free to integrate with the West or to build their identity in opposition to Western standards. Furthermore, unlike in the Russian empire, Galician Poles, Jews, and Ukrainians were equal citizens of the Habsburg empire, and they had established cultural autonomy. For example, Franzos integrated with German culture and accepted its normative standards as his own but he was also free to choose a different path. This possibility of choice and extent of assimilation was unattainable for British and French colonial subjects.

The dominant European middle-class sexual regime came to Galicia in

a very normative and masculinist version. Galician intellectuals associated what is conventionally referred to as the Victorian repressive regime with standards imposed by German nationalism, which eagerly assigned Orientalized Eastern European men with savage ruggedness or, in a contradictory fashion, with masochistic submissiveness. Fin de siècle intellectuals observed that the generation of their parents would fully embrace Victorian standards to escape orientalizing. Rather than affirming their normativity, these young modernists were more interested in forming an alternative to what they perceived as foreign and repressive impositions.

The young modernists found that such an alternative might develop in the contact with “the people.” Many Galician intellectuals who observed and experienced sexual attitudes of the rural and urban working classes, began to perceive

them as a *Naturvolk*. Malinowski and Reich grew up observing the customs of Galician highlanders, the former in the west and the latter in the east of the crown land. Both claimed the authenticity of their “free” sexual attitude, which contrasted with the repression governing their middle-class families. The cracks in the normative character of the European sexual regime was more visible from the edge, allowing Reich and Malinowski to undermine it later in life.

In 1912, the Ukrainian ethnographer Wolodymyr Hnatjuk, working together with the author Ivan Franko, published the two-volume *Sexual Life of Ukrainian Peasantry*: a collection of hundreds of short erotic stories gathered through ethnographic research. Its prime purpose was differentiation from the German sexual regime, showing its repressive character in opposition to Ukrainian “free love,” constituting a somewhat surprising twist in the history of Ukrainian nationalism. This work was supported in Germany by the ethnographer Friedrich S. Krauss, who published it under the auspices of his journal *Anthropophyteia*, which soon after was banned by the imperial authorities for immorality. Together with Krauss's work about the Balkans, *Sexual Life of Ukrainian Peasantry* was an important point of reference in Freud's theory of culturally developed sexual repression.

Galician intellectuals could decide to align with “the people” or with “civilized” bourgeois standards. Both choices yielded innovative results and gave birth to the cultural outlook. In Freud and Franzos' cases, assimilation required severance from racialized discourse and the introduction of an indeterminate intellectual framework. The cultural theory of sexuality thus was a necessary tool of assimilation. But it also served Reich and Hnatjuk to undermine the middle-class repressive regime. This shows that, whether their intention is assimilation or disruption, those who move from the margins to the center are set to be revolutionaries. ◀

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What Is the West and Where Did It Come From?

BY GEORGIOS VAROUXAKIS

The West is on everyone's lips, but what exactly is it? Where is it? When did the term begin to be used as a sociopolitical concept? More importantly, why? Who belongs to it? How many definitions of the West are there? Are they all valid? Is the West a perennial entity with an unchanging essence, or is it a mutable entity, a flexible, changeable narrative—in other words, an idea?

The “West” first acquired a political meaning as a term at the end of the 4th century CE when the Roman Empire was divided into its eastern and western parts. The Western Roman Empire was soon after conquered by waves of Germanic invaders. Although in 800 Charlemagne was crowned emperor of the Romans, he was in practice spoken of as emperor of the West, given that there was the Eastern Roman Empire ruled from Constantinople (later called the Byzantine Empire). Thus the West was frequently used as a historical term in the 18th century to describe the successor states, kingdoms, and principalities that emerged from the ruins of the Western Roman Empire and claimed its legacy.

But this was not the same thing as what we mean by the West today. It did not refer to a contemporary supranational community or a plan for any future alliance or federation. When West-Europeans talked of themselves as a supranational community of peoples who shared a common culture and, some of them thought, should join in a federation of some sort, the name they used for this was Europe or Christendom, the latter used before the former or sometimes simultaneously.

So, when did the West in its sociopolitical modern sense emerge and why? It may come as a surprise to those steeped in the academic literature, but theories inspired by the work of Edward Said, claiming that the West was invented through the othering of the “East” are not relevant here. For West-Europeans were happy for centuries to juxtapose to whatever East they had in mind the self-appellation Christendom or Europe rather than West or Western civilization. Evocation of the West arose only when they had to differentiate themselves from others who were also Christian and European. The other in contradistinction to whom the modern idea of the West was born—the elephant in the room, or rather the bear in the room of the 1815 Congress of Vienna—was Russia. Some incipient explicit calls for a Western federation to defend the rest of Europe from the danger perceived to emanate from Russia emerged in the 1820s in the context of the Greek Revolution. Calls for a Western alliance against despotic Russia intensified in the 1830s. And the first deliberate, explicit, and systematic introduction of an idea



Monument of Auguste Comte, Paris.

of the West, and a proposal for the creation of a Republic of the West that would reorganize European and world politics on a completely new basis came from the French philosopher Auguste Comte—the founder of sociology, positivism, and the “religion of humanity” in the 1840s. It was propagated by Comte’s many and passionate disciples around the world. (A reminder of his extraordinary influence for some decades can be found on the flag of Brazil, adopted in 1889 when the country’s republic was founded by Comtist positivists, which bears Comte’s motto *Ordem e Progresso* [Order and Progress]).

The twist in the story is that the idea of the West was not invented in the last two decades of the 19th century to promote the aims of high imperialism (as the current academic orthodoxy has it) but first thoroughly articulated and promoted as part of a passionately anti-imperialist political project: Comte’s pacifist and altruistically inclined Republic of the West. This does not mean that many different, in some cases widely different, conceptualizations of the West (in-

cluding ones that justified and promoted imperialism) were not articulated by others later. But the idea was not born to serve imperialism, and thus inherently or quintessentially imperialistic. Neither was the idea of the West primarily Anglo-American, with the “Anglosphere” at its core. On the contrary, it started being used in Britain later than in France and in German-speaking lands, and it reached America even later (primarily through German influences).

There is not one idea of the West. And yet, to quote the 19th-century historian Arnold Heeren, “names are not matters of indifference in politics.” The concept of the West has accumulated a lot of associations over centuries. Users stress some of them more than others in different situations, according to what they want to achieve. What is to be done then? The best response to the polysemy of meanings of the West is a genealogical study of its long history. Friedrich Nietzsche was right that one cannot define something with a long history; one can only study

the different layers of meaning that have been successively deposited and have been fighting to impose themselves. What is crucial is that the meanings that prevailed in earlier stages do not completely disappear when others are superimposed, and that they leave some traces that may resurface in different circumstances.

In his famous 1993 article “The Clash of Civilizations?,” Samuel Huntington stressed “civilization consciousness,” yet such consciousness is partial among members of what he labeled “Western civilization.” But there are notable exceptions to this that are relevant in the context of *Mittel-europa*. It was a Polish president of the European Council, Donald Tusk, who declared that, if it happened, Brexit could be the beginning of the destruction of not only the European Union but also of “West-

ern political civilisation in its entirety.” It was an Estonian student who asked me the question with which this article will conclude. And it was no accident that Warsaw was where, in 2017, President Donald Trump gave a speech replete with references to the West and Western civilization that were otherwise completely dissonant with his isolationist, America First and anti-NATO rhetoric. It is unmissable how often it is people from Central and Eastern Europe—Milan Kundera and Czesław Miłosz’s “kidnapped West”—whose countries recently escaped the clutches of Soviet and Communist rule, who most explicitly assert and even celebrate their newly refound membership of Western civilization or the West. Today, the West is still evoked by people who want to differentiate themselves from Russia—a Russia that cannot be wished away from being part of Europe. There are many other examples of layers of the historically deposited meanings of the concept of the West resurfacing according to circumstances. These are things that can only be fully appreci-

ated through a *longue durée* study of the history of the idea of the West.

When, in July 2022, I gave a lecture related to this topic in Tallinn, a doctoral student from Tartu University asked me a challenging question. The timing was crucial. With the war in Ukraine having recently begun, people in the Baltic republics were intensely nervous about Russia’s next moves. Henry asked me whether I was not worried that, by exposing the many different and contradictory meanings of the West, and somehow deconstructing the idea, I might help undermine our newfound unity? I took it that the unity in question referred to most Western states’ solidarity with Ukraine. I replied that the answer was implicit in the question and reminded the audience that the majority of Ukraine’s population is Christian Orthodox. The vast majority of the definitions of the West I had spoken about (and of the even greater number analyzed in my forthcoming book, *The West: The History of an Idea*) would not have included Ukraine in the West. In fact, Huntington predicted in the 1990s that there would never be serious violence between Ukrainians and Russians because they are members of a “Slavic-Orthodox civilization.” And yet, since 2022, the West has in some sense been fighting Russia by proxy alongside Ukraine. (Similar things could be said of Orthodox Greece, which Huntington more or less proposed to expel from NATO). Was that not the answer to Henry’s question? The West was, once more, being redefined as we spoke.

At the time of writing this article one cannot help speculating about potential redefinitions after January 2025. Depending on who has Trump’s ear, the United States may or may not project itself as the leader of the West. If it does not, one cannot exclude the possibility that other countries may see an opening. (France, for example, could be one to do so as there are many definitions of the West to justify it seeing itself as the heart of the West.) There are many precedents for such realignments and metamorphoses in the long story of the history of the idea of the West. ◀

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Stephen M. Walt continued from page 3

them at once. The result is growing uncertainty about the future, which in turn fosters insecurity and fear. Building a better world order under these conditions will be especially difficult.

What Is To Be Done?

Ideally, a new and better order would preserve the physical conditions required for sustained human existence; minimize the risk of major war; manage the movement of goods, capital, information, and people in broadly beneficial ways; and encourage respect for basic human rights. As the present order weakens, scholars and practitioners from many different countries should be working together to develop concrete proposals for what a new order might entail. The Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft's Better Order Project, whose participants represent countries from every continent, is one promising example, but it is just a first step.

To succeed, the states that are primarily responsible for and committed to the current order must recognize that the balance of power has shifted and that they will have to accommodate some of the interests of states that were excluded when the order was established. Acknowledging that reality does not require them to surrender all their core interests or principles, but it requires greater flexibility than they have shown in the past. At the same time, if rising powers such as China insist that new rules give them everything they want, building a legitimate and effective global order will be impossible. If that happens, the world is more likely to divide into partial orders governed by significantly different principles, each eyeing the other with considerable suspicion.

To avoid this outcome, states and other relevant actors will need a framework to guide their efforts and to build trust among them. My colleague Dani Rodrik and I have suggested that states might begin this process by formally adopting a "meta-regime" in which issues or policies are placed into one of three categories, but without having to agree in advance which problems or actions go in each one, or deciding what specific norms or rules will eventually be adopted.

The first category—"prohibited actions"—would contain those actions or policies that states agree not to do. The UN Charter contains a number of these proscriptions (such as barring the acquisition of territory by force), and one could imagine agreements not to engage in beggar-thy-neighbor trade policies, not to use nuclear weapons, and not to conduct targeted assassinations or torture.

The second category—"cooperative negotiation and mutual adjustments"—would be for areas or issues where states realize they can be better off if they adjust some of their behavior in exchange for reciprocal adjustments by others. Tariff reductions and arms-control agreements are classic examples of this sort of mutual adjustment; indeed, such compromises constitute much of

the "business as usual" among states and other global actors.

The third category—"independent actions"—would cover issues where mutual adjustment prove elusive and each state retains the right to act on its own to protect its interests. But there should still be guardrails: states would be free to act to protect a key interest, but not to deliberately harm another's interests or to try to gain a unilateral advantage. For example, a country might ban the use of a foreign technology to protect its national security—as the United States has done by restricting Huawei 5G systems—but not to harm a foreign competitor or weakening another country.

Once the idea of this meta-regime is adopted, states could begin to discuss which action might be prohibited, which areas are amenable to mutual adjustments, and which realms will be reserved for independent action. Over time, success would allow a greater number of harmful actions to be prohibited and more problems to be resolved via mutual adjustment, thereby decreasing the need for independent action or embedding within the constraints of a multilateral agreement. Competition would undoubtedly continue, but it would be a more benign, prosperous, and legitimate order.

This scheme is agnostic about the precise content of the new order whose concrete features would ultimately be determined by the participants. It is simply a mechanism for launching a constructive conversation among them. It encourages participants to state their preferences openly and to explain the reasoning behind them, which can help alleviate suspicions and build trust over time. It will not work, however, if the major powers make the pursuit of primacy their primary goal. But if they recognize the dangers of an all-out struggle for primacy and want to build a better order instead, adopting this meta-regime would facilitate their efforts.

Conclusion

We are at one of those Gramscian moments when "the old world is dying and the new world struggles to be born." The bipolar Cold War order ended in 1992 and the United States' attempt to construct a global liberal order collapsed in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis, the failed wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the global resurgence of populism and authoritarianism. Given the problems bearing down upon humanity, it is easy to be fatalistic and assume that a better world order will not emerge until we go through another catastrophic global upheaval like the Second World War.

But we need not and should not accept that grim fate. We can choose instead to be more optimistic, and work to develop norms, rules, and procedures that more accurately reflect the world of today and the needs of the future. Given those two alternatives, the right choice seems obvious. ◀

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Publikationen des IWM

Nathalie Tocci
Durch Widersprüche hindurch:
Europa in einer ambivalenten Welt
Wien: Mandelbaum Verlag, Oktober 2024, ca. 100 S., aus dem Amerikanischen von Andreas Wirthensohn, Herausgegeben vom Institut für die Wissenschaften vom Menschen



Das europäische Projekt entstand in einer durch Offenheit geprägten westlichen Welt, der Jahre des Krieges, des Nationalismus und der Abschottung vorausgegangen waren. Dieser Trend zur Öffnung erfasste nach Ende des Kalten Krieges den gesamten Globus. In dieser offenen Welt wurde gegenseitige Abhängigkeit als Quelle von Frieden und Wohlstand gesehen und Demokratisierung als linearer, irreversibler und mit dem Kapitalismus eng verbundener Prozess gedacht. Seit der Jahrtausendwende haben die Sicherheitskrise im Gefolge des 11. September, die globale Finanzkrise, die Krise der liberalen Demokratie und die damit einhergehende Welle des euroskeptischen Nationalis-

mus, die Pandemiekrise und schließlich die Kriege in Europa und im Nahen Osten eine Welt entstehen lassen, in der es schrittweise zu immer weitreichenderen Schließungen kam. Doch es wäre ein Irrglaube anzunehmen, wir lebten heute in einer geschlossenen Welt. Vielmehr bestehen in der Welt von heute Offenheit und Abschottung nebeneinander. Vor diesem Hintergrund müssen althergebrachte Konzepte und Ansätze revidiert werden. Europa muss Wege finden, durch diese neue, ambivalente Welt zu navigieren.

Die Politikwissenschaftlerin Nathalie Tocci war außenpolitische Beraterin der beiden Hohen Vertreter der EU für Außenpolitik, Federica Mogherini und Josep Borrell, und in dieser Funktion federführend für die Globale Strategie der EU für Außen- und Sicherheitspolitik verantwortlich.

Seyla Benhabib
Kosmopolitismus im Wandel:
Zwischen Demos, Kosmos und Globus
Wien: Mandelbaum Verlag, März 2024, ca. 100 S., aus dem Amerikanischen von Andreas Wirthensohn, Herausgegeben vom Institut für die Wissenschaften vom Menschen (IWM-Vorlesungen), ISBN 978-3-99136-053-7

Seit den letzten beiden Jahrzehnten des 20. Jahrhunderts ist ein starkes Interesse am Kosmopolitismus in den Sozial-, Kultur- und Rechtswissenschaften zu verzeichnen. Allerdings hat der Kosmopolitismus seit Beginn des neuen Jahrhunderts einen schweren Stand. Vor diesem Hintergrund formuliert Seyla Benhabib den Kosmopolitismus neu. Im Fokus ihrer Überlegungen steht die Frage, wie er sich in der heutigen Welt zusammen mit dem Bemühen um Gerechtigkeit im Globalen Süden und dem Streben nach planetarischer Nachhaltigkeit neu denken lässt.

Benhabib geht den zeitgenössischen Kritiken am Kosmopolitismus nach und kommt zum Schluss, dass es weiterhin möglich ist, den Kosmopolitismus zu verteidigen, indem man ihn von der Geschichte des westlichen Kapitalismus und dem Zeitalter des Imperialismus und Kolonialismus löst. Sie grenzt den

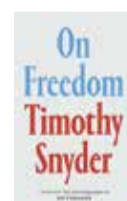


Kosmopolitismus von gängigen liberalen normativen Modellen unserer Zeit klar ab, und zeigt auf, dass allein der Kosmopolitismus die Fortschritte im Bereich der internationalen Menschenrechte integrieren kann. Nicht zuletzt plädiert sie für ein Verständnis des Kosmopolitismus, in dem auch das neue planetarische Bewusstsein, das im Gefolge der ökologischen Katastrophen unserer Zeit entsteht, seinen Niederschlag findet.

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Publications by Fellows

Timothy Snyder
On Freedom
New York: Random House LLC US, Sept. 2024, pp. 368, ISBN 978-0-593-79904-8



We think we're free if we can do and say as we please, and protect ourselves from government overreach. But true freedom isn't so much freedom from as freedom to—the freedom to thrive, to take risks for futures we choose by working together. Freedom is the value that makes all other values possible.

On Freedom takes us on a thrilling intellectual journey. Drawing on the work of philosophers and political dissidents, conversations with contemporary thinkers, and his own experiences coming of age in a time of American exceptionalism, Snyder identifies the practices and attitudes—the habits of mind—that will allow us to design a government in which we and future generations can flourish. We come to appreciate the importance of traditions (championed by the right) but also the role of institutions (the purview of the left). Intimate yet ambitious, this book helps forge a new consensus rooted in a politics of abundance, generosity, and grace.

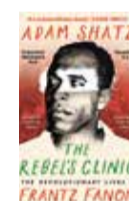
Deutsche Übersetzung:
Über Freiheit
München: C.H.Beck, September 2024, 410 S., aus dem Amerikanischen von Andreas Wirthensohn, ISBN 978-3-406-82140-0

Ayse Çağlar, Sabyasachi Basu Ray Chaudury, and Ranabir Samaddar (eds.)
Sites of Statelessness: Laws, Cities, Seas
New York: State University of New York Press, November 2024, 277 pp., ISBN 9781438499895



seas, cities, and law. Building around the postcolonial experiences of statelessness *Sites of Statelessness* examines the entanglements of citizenship policies and practices with the spread of statelessness in contemporary times, something that defies any kind of a citizen/stateless binary. These policies are significant, the background of a shift in emphasis from *jus soli* to *jus sanguinis*, the proliferation of borderland populations and nowhere people, population flows across (post) colonial border formations and boundary delimitations, and the growth of regional, formal, and informal labor markets characterized by immigrant labor economies. In this context, contributors address the distinctive dynamics of the different sites in the production of statelessness and considers the impact of these sites as critical and does not merely treat them as a backdrop. They argue that these different sites evoke different histories and repertoires and also bring different possibilities of alignment with emerging problematics.

Adam Shatz
The Rebel's Clinic:
The Revolutionary Lives of Frantz Fanon
New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2024, 464 pp., ISBN 978-1035900046



In the era of Black Lives Matter, Frantz Fanon's shadow looms larger than ever. He was the intellectual activist of the postcolonial era, and his writings about race, revolution, and the psychology of power continue to shape radical movements across the world. In this searching biography, Adam Shatz tells the story of Fanon's stunning journey, which has all the twists of a Cold War-era thriller. Fanon left his modest home in Martinique to fight in the French Army during World War II; when the war was over, he fell under the influence of Existentialism while studying medicine in Lyon and trying to make sense of his experiences as a Black man in a white city. Fanon went on to practice a novel psychiatry of "dis-alienation" in rural France and Algeria, and then join the Algerian independence struggle, where he became a spokesman, diplomat, and clandestine strategist. He died in 1961, while under the care of the CIA in a Maryland hospital.

Today, Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* and *The Wretched of the Earth* have become canonical texts of the Black and global radical imagination, comparable to James Baldwin's essays in their influence. And yet they are little understood. In *The Rebel's Clinic*, Shatz offers a dramatic reconstruction of Fanon's extraordinary life—and a guide to the books that underlie today's most vital efforts to challenge white supremacy and racial capitalism.

Der Balkan: Mission Possible

VON EVANGELOS KARAGIANNIS

Im Oktober 2024 hat die Historikerin Maria Todorova in Wien die diesjährigen IWM-Vorlesungen gehalten. Im Frühjahr erscheint die entsprechende Publikation unter dem Titel *Der Balkan: Mission Possible*.

„Nein, das ist kein Irrtum. So intellektuell obszön es auch klingen mag: Die Titel der IWM-Vorlesungen, die vom Institut für die Wissenschaften vom Menschen in Wien anlässlich des 100. Geburtstags von Hans-Georg Gadamer ins Leben gerufen wurden, und auf denen dieses Buch basiert, sind inspiriert von der Filmreihe *Mission Impossible* mit Tom Cruise. Und auch wenn ich in meinem Alter die physischen Stunts von Tom Cruise nicht mehr nachahmen kann, kann allein schon die Vorstellung des verwinkelten gebirgigen Terrains des Balkans (und seiner noch vertrackteren Geschichte) Schwindelgefühle auslösen. Dennoch gibt es nichts, was damit vergleichbar wäre, von einem Berggipfel im Balkangebirge hinunterzuschauen, und ich habe meine eigenen Stunts, die das Gelingen der Mission ermöglichen.“ Mit diesen Worten erläutert Maria Todorova den auf den ersten Blick überraschenden Titel ihres neuen Buches *Der Balkan: Mission Possible*, das im Frühjahr 2025 noch vor der englischen Fassung im Wiener Mandelbaum Verlag erscheinen wird. Das vom IWM herausgegebene Buch, kann als Begleitband zu Todorovas maßgeblichem Werk *Die Erfindung des Balkans* (1997) gelesen werden, das vor dreißig Jahren erschien und die Balkanforschung nachhaltig geprägt hat.

Vor dem Hintergrund der gewaltsamen Desintegration Jugoslawiens und der Bemühungen jener Zeit, den Unterschied des Balkans von West- und Mitteleuropa herauszustellen, lenkte *Die Erfindung des Balkans* die Aufmerksamkeit vom Balkan auf die Balkan-Expertise, von den Prozessen in der Region auf deren Beschreibung, und stellte die These auf, dass Erklärungsansätze für Phänomene auf dem Balkan auf einem stabilen System historisch gewachsener Stereotype beruhen. Bezeichnend für diesen Diskurs ist, dass die Inferiorität und Devianz der Region von der westlichen Norm nicht in Kategorien radikaler Alterität (wie im Falle des Orientalismus), sondern in Kategorien der Ambiguität formuliert wird. Der Balkan sei nicht das Andere, sondern das Alter-Ego Europas; nicht das Fremde, sondern die Schattenseite des Eigenen; eine Art „schwarzes Schaf“ der (besten) Familie (auf Erden).

Die Erfindung des Balkans war die wichtigste einer Reihe von akademischen Interventionen jener Zeit, die darauf abzielten, die Balkanforschung zu „queeren“ (Todorova), und erschütterte diese wie ein Erdbeben. Die Rezeption des Buches setzte kreative Kräfte frei, inspirierte innovative Forschung und machte die Bal-



Maria Todorova
Der Balkan: Mission Possible
Wien: Mandelbaum Verlag,
März 2025, ca. 350 Seiten, übersetzt
aus dem Amerikanischen von Andreas
Wirthensohn, ISBN 978-3-99136-092-6

kanforschung, die bis dahin ein von der Geschichtswissenschaft dominiertes Nischendasein fristete, für andere Disziplinen anschlussfähig. Für viele Menschen aus dem Balkan, die in akademischen Einrichtungen dem Balkanismus-Diskurs ausgesetzt waren, wirkte die Publikation wie ein Befreiungsschlag. Es war, als hätte der Balkan seine Stimme erhoben.

Seitdem gab es zahlreiche relevante Entwicklungen, nicht nur in der Forschung. Vor allem wurde im Zuge des EU-Erweiterungsprozesses der Großteil des Balkans „normalisiert“. Die Vorurteile sind zwar nicht verschwunden, haben aber ihre politische Funktion verloren und stehen daher auch nicht mehr im Zentrum einer öffentlichen Debatte. Es ist Ruhe eingekehrt – ein günstiger Moment, um Bilanz zu ziehen.

Das Buch besteht aus drei Teilen, deren Betitelung sich – wie der Titel des Buches selbst – an die einzelnen Actionfilme aus der Reihe *Mission Impossible* anlehnen. Der erste Teil zeichnet die Anfänge und den Niedergang des Balkans sowie den *Fallout* dieser Entwicklung nach. Todorova versteht den Balkan als vergängliches Gebilde, und spürt seiner Geschichte nach, von seinem Aufkommen über sein Ende als geopolitisches Konstrukt bis hin zu seinem Vermächtnis als Signifikant (denken Sie an die Metapher der Balkanisierung). Im zweiten Teil des Buches (*Dead Reckoning*) geht die Autorin auf die verschiedenen Ansätze zur Erfassung des Balkans ein. Sie diskutiert die Institutionalisierung der Balkanstudien und die vorherr-

schenden Trends der Balkanforschung und wirft die Frage auf, ob der Balkan eine eigene Epistemologie braucht. Im dritten Teil (*Rogue Nation*) wird ein drastischer Perspektivwechsel vollzogen. Anhand von Kurzbiographien dreier, der Öffentlichkeit nicht sehr bekannter Personen aus Bulgarien, werden die Macht und die Fallstricke des „Framing“ aufgezeigt. Typisch für Todorova stehen auch in diesem Buch methodische und epistemologische Fragen im Mittelpunkt, die die Anschlussfähigkeit ihrer Arbeit an andere Disziplinen gewährleisten. Immer wieder greift sie in ihren Ausführungen auf Gadamer und dessen Verteidigung der Geisteswissenschaften sowie seiner Auffassung von Hermeneutik zurück.

Das Buch bietet einen Überblick und eine Diskussion der Balkanforschung der letzten drei Jahrzehnte, wenn auch nicht allen Trends die gleiche Aufmerksamkeit geschenkt werden kann. Auf zwei Paradigmen geht Todorova ausführlich ein. Das erste ist mit der Kategorie der „Race“ verbunden, der sie in ihrer Forschungsarbeit keine große Aufmerksamkeit geschenkt hat. Obwohl sie nach wie vor der Überzeugung ist, dass „Race“ für die Herausbildung des Balkanismus-Diskurses nicht ausschlaggebend war, kann sie insbesondere dem Modell Loïc Wacziarg, das den historischen und wandelbaren Gebrauch des Begriffs zu erklären vermag, viel abgewinnen.

Maria Todorova
**DER BALKAN:
MISSION POSSIBLE**
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Noch eingehender geht sie auf die Paradigmen des Imperiums und der Kolonialität (u.a. Postkolonialität, Dekolonialität) ein, die heute die Forschung beherrschen. Sie kritisiert die inflationäre Verwendung der Kategorie der Kolonialität und fordert zeit- und ortsgebundene Spezifität. Letztere sei „nicht nur wichtig, um kognitive Deformationen zu vermeiden, sondern auch aus ethischen Gründen. Das emanzipatorische Mäntelchen des Postkolonialismus dient allzu oft als Deckmantel für das ewige Lamento über die Opferrolle und öffnet ungewollt die Tür zum Nationalismus.“

Todorova plädiert für das Auseinanderhalten der Kategorien des Imperialen und Kolonialen. Sie widerspricht Timothy Snyder, der in den Revolutionen auf dem Balkan gegen die osmanische Herrschaft den Beginn des dekolonialen Moments sieht. „Das Argument, der Balkan sei Vorreiter der Dekolonialisierung gewesen, beruhte auf der Prämisse, dass das Osmanische Reich kolonial war. Da es auf dem Balkan im 19. Jahrhundert weder

eine Kolonie noch einen Kolonisateur gab, ist die Verwendung des Begriffs ‚Dekolonisierung‘ aus meiner Sicht grundlos. Nicht jede Form von Unterordnung, Unterwerfung und Machthegeemonie lässt sich als ‚kolonial‘ bezeichnen. Nicht jeder Widerstand ist Dekolonisierung.“ Während Snyder den Nationalbewegungen auf dem Balkan eine Vorbildfunktion für spätere Nationalismen zuschreibt (und somit von den Defiziten mimetischer Nachzügler befreit) und ihnen eine wesentlich größere Bedeutung für die Entwicklung des Nationalismus beimisst als dem französischen Modell, sieht Todorova darin die Rückkehr der längst überwundenen Unterscheidung zwischen westlichem und östlichem Nationalismus durch die Hintertür. Dies verweise zudem auf die Defizite des Letzteren, da Snyder zufolge das Modell des Balkans ein erfolgreiches Modell der Des-, nicht aber der Reintegration war. Ungeachtet ihrer grundsätzlichen Einwände hat Todorova Verständnis für die Übernahme des Vokabulars der Dekolonialität durch eine neue Generation von Wissenschaftler:innen, die jüngere Erfahrungen Osteuropas und des Balkans analysieren, und wertet dies als einen Versuch, die Region in einen universalisierenden Diskurs einzubeziehen.

Obwohl Todorova sich der Vorteile und Chancen universalisierender Diskurse bewusst ist, ist sie der Überzeugung, dass es zeit- und raumspezifischer Studien bedarf, um etablierte Großnarrative zu erschüttern. Sie ist jedoch nicht der Ansicht, dass die Forschung die Spannung zwischen beiden heuristischen Ansätzen lösen kann, da es die politischen Umstände sind, die den Nährboden der Dichotomie bilden.

Jedenfalls lässt sich der Maßstab des Partikularen und insbesondere des Individuums, der im dritten Teil des Buches zur Geltung kommt, als bewusste methodische Entscheidung der Autorin gegen pauschale Verallgemeinerungen verstehen, die im Einklang mit dem „Leitmotiv“ ihrer Forschung steht, das Verschwinden des Liminalen durch generalisierende Diskurse in Frage zu stellen. Der Maßstab des Partikularen richtet das Licht auf das, was untergeht, wenn Generalisierungen die chaotische Wirklichkeit „ordnen“. Auf den hartnäckigen positivistischen Einwand, ob das Partikulare überhaupt Aufmerksamkeit verdient, ist mit Goethe zu erwidern, „eine einzelne Handlung oder Begebenheit ist interessant, nicht weil sie erklärbar oder wahrscheinlich, sondern weil sie wahr ist.“ ◀

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