

By this time, the invisible virus, Covid-19, has taken control of politics, the economy, and society just about everywhere in the world. Even leading politicians all over the globe – to the extent that they are acting prudently and responsibly – have been following the expert advice of virologists, since the latter are the only ones who know precisely how and how rapidly the virus is spreading. Moreover, the virologists, together with physicians and pharmacologists, are among the few who can judge which of the vaccines or medicines now under review might be deployed to fight the virus and when, after careful deliberation, those might be made widely available. We must avoid two extreme reactions here: overhasty hero-worship of actors who want to shine by chalking up quick successes, on one side, and, on the other, accepting the cynical recommendations of social Darwinists who insist that it would be better to sacrifice the elderly, who presumably wouldn't survive the epidemic anyway, than to disrupt the operations of the markets and businesses through too much prevention. Besides the risks that it poses to the lives and health of millions of people, the current pandemic harbors two other existential threats. It will test whether the power of decency, humanity, and solidarity will win out over extremely short-sighted economic interests. Also, we shall see whether the world's democracies are strong and capable enough not to allow political power to fall into the hands of »leaders« who wish to use the crisis as a pretext for undemocratic rule.



Among many other topics, the present volume investigates the communications techniques and strategies of mobilization used by right-wing populists and extremists in Europe and especially in Germany. All around the globe one can observe the linkages between two phenomena: first, what many perceive to be the impotence of democracy when it caters too much to the interests of economic elites while ignoring the social security of almost everyone else, and, second, the willingness of a great many ordinary citizens to follow the pied-piper's tune of populist seducers. In Europe the two phenomena manifest themselves in the rise of strong, and apparently stable right-wing populist parties that, in turn, weaken democracy. The other grand theme of this issue of the Quarterly is the all-round revitalizing of ecological politics in the EU by the Green New Deal recently proclaimed by the new Commission. It is intended to be a long-term, consistently applied project that provides some social cushioning as well. The scheme deserves all the support it can get. Above all, it is the European Parliament that will be challenged now to prove its value in a watchdog role.

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Virtual Aspects of Right-wing Terrorism: A Threat-level assessment

Rarely has the peril of right-wing terrorism emerged as clearly as it did in 2019. In response, last year *Der Spiegel* devoted three lead stories to the issue. The time for rethinking the problem is long overdue. In March of last year, after years of planning, an Australian murdered 51 of the faithful in two mosques located in the New Zealand city of Christchurch. He broadcast the massacre live on Facebook using a head-mounted camera. In June, the first right-wing murder of a politician carried out in the history of the Federal Republic horrified the public. The Hessian right-wing extremist Stephan Ernst, who was no longer on the radar of the security services, has been charged with the murder of the Kassel district president, Walter Lübcke. And on October 9, 27-year-old Stephan Balliet attempted to break into a Halle synagogue in broad daylight. When he failed, he shot to death two other people at random. He used the Christchurch shooter as a model, streaming his deed live as the former had done. The video was sent to schoolchildren in Halle via WhatsApp and other messaging services.

All three perpetrators had in common that they evidently acted alone in carrying out their deeds. They are so-called lone wolves – people who do not belong to any stable organization, invent their own propaganda, and kill because of their political convictions. Radicals like these kill of their own volition and seemingly unpredictably, intending to light a beacon. The global public has become aware of this danger, certainly no later than July 22, 2011. On that day, after years of planning, the Norwegian extremist Anders Behring Breivik murdered 77 people, including many youths. Exactly five years later, on a deliberately chosen date, 18-year-old David Sonboly sowed fear and terror in the city of Munich by killing nine people at the Olympia Shopping Center. It took three more years for the Bavarian state government to say that this was (also) a politically motivated deed. Previously, the government had bent over backwards to interpret it in non-political terms, with the result that it never came up in the report of the Constitutional Protection Service, nor was it listed as a politically motivated crime. It took an expert review by the city of Munich and mounting public pressure to provoke authorities gradually to rethink their conclusions. Obviously, some people are having a hard time acknowledging that there are virtually networked political perpetrators out there with a right-wing extremist mentality.

The perpetrators draw their political motivation from racist odds and ends plus a belief in their own superiority. They have one thing in common: They all slipped through the nets of the police. The Halle perpetrator may have planned and committed his crime alone and therefore be portrayed as a classic lone wolf. Yet ideologically and culturally he is part of a large, radicalized, and dangerous internet community.

Lone wolves seem to share one important characteristic: They pass through a phase of radicalization that they experience in the seclusion of their own rooms, via

the internet and social media. Nevertheless, it would be an exaggeration to identify the internet as the principal setting of radicalization. Essentially, lone wolves always have an affinity to a person, community, or group, whether online or in the real world. That finding is all the more important, because it contradicts the claim that terrorists of this kind don't communicate with other people or conform to existing traditions of violence.

In most cases, however, there is an interplay between online and offline activities, in which the two spheres overlap. Are the security agencies prepared for this? The Munich case should make us skeptical about that. Until now, debates within security service circles barely have acknowledged that online gaming also serves as a platform for criminals, especially terrorists. But they are an interesting vehicle, because they enable intensive communication to take place. Yet strangely enough, investigators have rarely focused on them, in contrast, say, to smartphones. That is the reason why the Bavarian special agents of the OEZ Special Commission (SOKO) responsible for the investigation of the Munich attacks had little idea of Sonboly's virtual activities. True, shortly after the crime authorities made inquiries at Valve, the operator of the »Steam« platform, obtaining profiles, chat records, and IP addresses. But they were unable to derive any really useful information from these sources. The problem is that it is difficult to draw sharp lines distinguishing between fun and seriousness. The talk is full of satire and disguised by personal codes that, of course, also can be harmless.

One example is furnished by the so-called »pedobear« (a combination of pedophilia and bear) that appeared on the page above Sonboly next to each victim and was supposed to mock them. This bear is highly popular in certain circles and is considered an internet phenomenon. It is posted in forums that are supposed to look funny, strange, or creepy. Also, the bear's ambiguity is used in »ironic« ways to foil security measures. It serves precisely as a form of ridicule (as in the hero-worshipping obituary for Sonboly), for example when it is clad as the Pope on a T-shirt. In that instance, the point was to lampoon cases of sexual abuse in the Church. What seems especially worrying here is that this sort of virtual hall of fame, even though it was semi-public, should have come into being apparently undetected and been expanded into a Wikipedia-like encyclopedia. This case shows all too clearly that, as usual, the investigating authorities interpret terms like these as »internet pseudonyms« with which they will not get far. It is true that users can register with Steam without revealing any of their personal data. A nickname or a throw-away email are enough to join in discussions on the platform. But it is possible to discover who the person behind the pseudonym is with the aid of an IP address simply by asking the provider. As long as a user does not resort to any tools to mask the IP, it should not be difficult for prosecutors to find out the identity of Steam users.

In May, 2018 Steam advertised the game *Active Shooter*, in which a school massacre is simulated. The player assumes the role of a team member in a special commando unit that is looking for a mass shooter in a school. Then the perspective switches to that of a person shooting wildly in all directions. The promotional clip ends with images of corpses lying on the ground, which enables the gamer to deter-

mine the number of the dead. Apparently, this realistic-seeming simulation now has been withdrawn in the wake of huge protests. But that does not necessarily mean much. *Hatred*, another simulation of mass murder, was first removed and then reinstated. For that reason, considerable doubt remains about whether the gaming industry wants to do – or even is capable of doing – an about-face after so many school shootings. Commercial interests take priority over the annoying ethical debates that really ought to happen, especially in the United States given the number of such incidents there.

But violent games are less of a problem than the social platforms in which communities such as »Kill the Jew« or »Neo-Nazi Fascist Party« get together as public or private groups. In 2017 the *Huffington Post* identified thousands of accounts and user groups in which individuals describe themselves as National Socialists, school shooters, or racists. It is precisely the employment of satire, a favorite ploy, that is supposed to conceal true intentions, blurring beyond recognition the lines between a tasteless game and deadly seriousness. On Steam, especially, there are »black sheep« players who evidently set up semi-public extremist forums, send voice and text messages, communicate under the radar of security agencies, and share their violent fantasies, all unmolested by anyone. By this time, it is pointless to talk about individual cases any longer, because it is here that like-minded people choose to gather and network.

In the case of David Sonboly, it is an intriguing fact that the investigation into his crimes was terminated officially in March of 2017. According to the testimony of the authorities, every lead had been thoroughly examined. Some 60 detectives from the special investigative team OEK evaluated around 1,750 clues and sifted through more than 1,000 files. Nevertheless, the virtual network remained unknown. Here is another fact that raises delicate questions: As early as December 9, 2017, the German Federal Criminal Office knew of the connection between Sonboly and a 21-year-old extremist, William Atchison, who shot to death two students of Hispanic-American extraction at the high school in Aztec, New Mexico on December 17, 2017. According to information provided by the Federal Criminal Office itself, it did not inform the Bavarian State Criminal Office of this until June 14, 2018, even though the federal agency was in charge of the investigation. The failure to pass on this information and the absence of information-sharing is surprising, given that the Federal Criminal Office, if requested, supposedly »accompanies and supports« the responsible Bavarian police from its central office. That implies »the coordination and control of information exchanges between the criminal police and foreign countries.«

David Sonboly was networked with like-minded people all over the world through the forum »Anti-Refugee-Club« on Steam. That forum warns of a Muslim invasion of Europe, including Germany. At the time the crime was committed, the group had 261 members. It evidently formed in response to the Sylvester Eve events in Cologne in 2015-16. Its moderator was William Atchison. In real life a great many of the statements expressed on it would be punishable by law, since they combined a hostile attitude toward refugees with (illegal) Holocaust denial. Comments such as

»Back then you Germans had it figured out,« or headings like »The Fourth Reich, when?« or calling group members by names such as »SS group leader« and other such remarks were not hard to find. The American moderator Atchison, who held many accounts and administered a variety of forums, made sure Sonboly was registered in the virtual hall of fame of right-wing assassins. The Club continued to exist until September, 2017, which is long after the Munich beacon was lit. In December of 2017, Atchison then went on to commit murders of his own at the high school in New Mexico, after which he committed suicide. All of these facts could have been known in advance. As early as 2010, a player in a German forum complained about the spread of so many hate groups.

Attempts at prevention – but with the wrong tools

In May of 2019, heads of state, including New Zealand's Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern and French President Emmanuel Macron, together with industry representatives jointly signed the »Christchurch Appeal,« a plan intended to block online content linked to terrorism or violent extremism. The USA, in which – besides Facebook, Twitter & Co. – platforms like Steam are operated, refused to sign. At the beginning of 2018, the so-called Network Enforcement Act went into effect in Germany. It provides that online platforms such as Facebook must take down content that would clearly be punishable under the law within 24 hours of notification about them. In less clear-cut cases they have a week's time. Offenders are threatened with fines of up to 50 million euros. If the networks do not respond quickly enough, users can file a complaint with the Federal Justice Office. However, computer and video games are not covered by the law, which means that its effectiveness will be limited. Obviously, the gaming industry lobby managed to carve out an exemption for online games. The law's focus on Facebook and Twitter seems antiquated anyway in the face of the current threat level. Thus, the Network Act in Germany seems to be the wrong tool for the job.

Clearly, the gamers have a formidable lobby. That shows up plainly in the wake of Halle. Minister of State for Digital Affairs Dorothee Bär (CSU) criticized her fellow party member, Horst Seehofer, for wanting to put the gamer scene in his crosshairs. There is a parliamentary group at the federal level known as »eSports and Gaming« that includes deputies from several party delegations. It has recently issued a joint declaration in which it takes a clear position against assertions that there is any fundamental connection between gaming and right-wing extremist threats.

Lone Wolf terrorists motivated by right-wing extremism stand out not only because they are psychologically disturbed, but also because they are part of a larger ideological pack. Radicalization should be considered as a social process. Such terrorists prove to be attracted to representations of violence of whatever kind and see in it proven means of articulating their problems and desires. They blend pompous political manifestos with the murder of people who did nothing to them and with whom they have no personal connection. Their racist world-view divides the world into friend and foe, and their hatred is directed against minorities.

It would be a fatal error to explain the new right-wing terrorism by pointing out how easy it is for the terrorists to gain access to the internet. The growing polarization of society, along with growing verbal radicalism, also plays a part. Hence, modern societies are obliged to develop sensitive antennae to detect narcissistic patterns and messages motivated by right-wing extremism. After all, new, virtually-networked perpetrator types have emerged, who, now as in the past, are perceived as threats only sporadically. Terrorism too, the most extreme and dangerous form of social action, is inseparable from society and its discontents. Even lone wolf terrorists are »children of their time.«



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The Riddle of the Alternative für Deutschland (AfD)

Anyone who in 2009 – i.e., eleven years ago – had dared to predict that a right-wing populist party would succeed in carving out a niche for itself in the German parliamentary system at every level, from municipalities and *Land* (provincial) parliaments to the Bundestag and the European Parliament, would have been derided as a notorious pessimist. It was assumed back then that, if any system-critical alternative were to emerge in response to the crisis of global financial capitalism then underway, it would have to come from the left, if at all. To demonstrate how unlikely it was that any such prediction would come true, one would have made the obligatory references, citing the fragmented landscape of right-wing extremist parties and groupings, caught up in bitter feuds with one another, Germany's guilt-filled history, the liberal climate prevailing in the country, and – last but not least – the outstanding ability of our social welfare state to integrate the marginalized. This special role, it would have been said, should cast Germany in a different light from neighboring European countries, in which parliamentary right-wing populism by then had become a fixture of everyday political life. When one now – eleven years later – contemplates the improbable rapidity, tenacity, and skill at agenda-setting that characterize the AfD's success, one slowly starts to recognize how momentous this phenomenon really is. At any rate, the quest for the causes of the rise of this newcomer party, and from the far right at that – a unique event in its own way and unimaginable a few years ago – scared the devil out of mainstream society in Germany.

How do we explain this improbable case? Our first thesis is that the unprecedented rise of right-wing populism has a great deal to do with the changed role of emotions in the political process. That is, we must factor in the perceptions and

expectations of one part of society vis-à-vis established societal actors: i.e., the »establishment,« with the politicians at its apex. One of the driving forces behind the success of the AfD has been its simplistic solutions, which are advertised as »plain common sense.« Appeals such as these resonate well with those who have experienced social or cultural disappointments, which often are accompanied by declining willingness to engage in a rational, substantive dialogue about political space, with all of its ambivalence, contradictions and asynchronicities. In a political space structured this way, the AfD has relied successfully on specific narratives and the mobilization of emotions, especially of anxieties, to divide society further and to realize that the so-called losers from modernization are its political base.

The bipolar structure of the polarization generated by the AfD appeals principally to those who are disappointed and frustrated, who long since have shunned all contact with the principal actors of the political system and often no longer bother to vote. Emotion-laden appeals are directed at such people designed to stir up aggression against »those at the top,« the established politicians, as well as to provoke anxieties about »foreign infiltration« by »those on the outside.« It makes sense, then, that the AfD engages in a great deal of negative campaigning – particularly visible in social media – against its political rivals and certain groups in society.

In opposing political correctness, minorities, and so-called genderism, these resentments have links to traditional thought patterns of working-class authoritarianism. In this way, pre-existing thought patterns and emotions become the starting point for an actively angry posture, in which cooperative, rational, and evidence-based ways of dealing with reality are disparaged. The idea of »crisis« is inflated such that the political establishment can be charged with both incompetence and loss of control. Fears of downward social mobility are stirred up through images of refugee- and crime-waves that supposedly undermine the cohesion of »German society.«

The second thesis presented here holds that one condition for the rise of the AfD was the fact that it entered the political fray via the detour of Euro-skepticism, borne along by a group of neo-liberal and national-conservative representatives of the disillusioned middle class. By dint of their experience and cultural capital, directed especially against the CDU/CSU and the FDP, they were able to overcome the relatively high political barriers to entry into the political system. Even though later developments were not what these original actors had planned on, it hardly would be possible to explain the party's rapid entry into – and rise within – the political system and its subsequent evolution without taking into account this political detour. A crucial factor in the rise of the AfD was that, in its early stages, it was not closely identified with right-wing extremist rabble-rousers, but with well-placed academic, journalistic, and political representatives of the Bonn Republic. Thus, in 2013 those who voted for the AfD were considerably less right-wing and hostile to foreigners than those who do so today. By the elections of 2017, the political profile of the AfD electorate had shifted quite a bit further to the right.

The third thesis concerns gaps in the representation of important substantive policy areas in German parliaments. Contemporary mainstream policymaking has

failed to address a number of these, including Europe, immigration, and – last but not least – the conservative model of the family and society. Here, the AfD is catering to preferences that were always present in latent form and thus presumably it is filling a supply gap.

By its radical rejection of the dominant notions in the policy fields noted above, the AfD is stage-managing the idea that there is a fundamental alternative that would suit people better. They have in mind an alternative that would dismantle today's »lefty-greeny, grubby Germany,« which has roots in the movement of '68. Their alternative would be situated on the national territory and in German history, and that is the reason why the country should repudiate supranational, European, and global solutions. In order to evade the power of the establishment, solutions have to be found that are directly negotiated with the people and for which they will assume responsibility. Thus, the goal is to restore a voice to those who are not socially and culturally in accord with the regnant modernization processes and who see themselves as the potential losers from those trends.

The backward-looking program and simplistic policy responses of the AfD go hand in hand with a specific kind of communicative practice. Relying on its channels of communication and stage-management in the media, the party is trying to place itself on the cutting edge of what is technologically feasible. In that effort it does not always succeed. Nevertheless, so our fourth thesis runs, the AfD is the first true internet party that deliberately uses media space to stoke emotions and resentments so as to convert them into anger at the establishment. No party in Germany ever before has exploited the participatory potential of social media so intensively and cleverly to communicate its concerns. Still, the AfD is by no means the first party to put the topic of the internet on the agenda. The »Pirate« party deserves credit for that. But the AfD is the first party to use the internet as an outrage machine, or as a war room, and thus to create its own alternative public sphere.

According to our fifth thesis one can understand the AfD – a party of metamorphoses and existential crises – as a right-wing populist party of a new type. Apparently, it does not want to be the kind of party that goes all out to recruit members (a »membership party«); instead, it wants to be a movement party. If it were a membership party, it would run the risk of institutionalizing its internal contradictions without being able to solve them. As a movement party it can more easily finesse those internal contradictions, take refuge in vagueness, and do a better job of making itself into a projection screen. That too is a good reason for worrying less about members and more about donors and voters.

Our sixth thesis holds that there is a precarious relationship between guidance and leadership on one hand, and lack of charisma on the other. The AfD lacks an integrative charismatic leadership cadre at the national level, but it does have Björn Höcke, a self-proclaimed local leader who does have charisma, but who also is a highly polarizing figure. In this respect, the charismatic leadership approach, when applied to the party as a whole, would most likely culminate in the party's disintegration. In the AfD what matters is less charismatic leadership than bureaucratic and communicative control. It is a striking fact that in the party's Bundestag delega-

tion, its current control center, you will not encounter the more polarizing leaders. They are to be found elsewhere, in the *Land* parliaments. But it is also noteworthy that during its first year in the Bundestag the control center managed to perform a certain integrative function. With a modernizing style and cachet as an experienced senior leader who opportunistically responds to the needs of each faction, Alexander Gauland has been able to pull off this integrative balancing act. And it certainly has not hurt that he does not shy away from racist escalations of his own. The dual leadership arrangement plus the concentration of media resources on the AfD leadership team certainly contribute to that integration effect as well. The latter point is impressively corroborated by the fact that individual AfD actors on average use social media less frequently than do the candidates of other parties. In other words, the high communication scores in social media for the AfD as a whole are attributable to skilled management that focuses attention on the upper echelon of the AfD's leadership. And we should not forget about a further dimension if we want to understand the party's self-preservation: the permanent pressure brought to bear by the public sphere, which constantly shakes it up anew and simultaneously forces it to seek intra-party consensus. Without that pressure, the business of internal integration would be many times more difficult.

Seventh, the success of the AfD as a right-wing populist party mainly may be traced back to its success – for the first time in Germany's postwar history – at forging a single-party coalition between right-wingers oriented to parliamentary politics and those who want to be part of a movement. The two factions are dependent upon each other. The first group legitimizes the AfD as a party that wants to adhere to the Basic Law. The second stands for an approach that tactically recognizes the importance of constitutionality, yet at the same time wishes to overcome the framework it represents. The loud voices of the radicals make headlines for the AfD, draw attention to it, and set the agenda. Here we have a force that tells »those at the top« what's what and that will not readily back down. But the more moderate tone of its critique of the »establishment« ensures that the party will continue to be acceptable to those who do not want to support an extremist party. Thus, a party has come on the scene in the form of the AfD that is diametrically opposed to the established forces on the political spectrum on matters of substance and that attracts attention due to its accusatory, indignant, confrontational, and provocative communicative practices.

The play of forces between the two unequal factions of the AfD is many-faceted. Those oriented to parliamentary politics hold most of the mandates there, whereas the movement-oriented faction dominates the headlines. The pro-parliamentary party members hold most of the leadership positions in the AfD's Bundestag contingent and in the party itself; the movement-oriented members dominate party conferences, since they act in more tightly organized, disciplined, provocative ways, true to the principle of loyalty to those in authority. The self-confidence and arrogance of the movement-oriented faction has roots in the eastern part of the Republic, because there the AfD has the potential to become a new big-tent party, quantitatively on a par with the older big-tent parties; in fact, it sees itself as the appointed

mouthpiece of the East. Generally speaking, in East Germany it has acquired the additional function of representing rural areas against the »establishment.« In the federal elections of 2017, its bastions in the East were in rural areas, whereas in the West they were in heavily populated urban constituencies. Thus, in this respect East and West are drifting apart in the AfD, which may be the handwriting on the wall for the Republic as a whole.

Yet the play of forces here involves more than simply the relationship between those interested in parliamentary politics and the more movement-oriented faction. It is also regulated by boards of audit, the country's Law on Parties, the internal procedural rules of parliament and, last not least, the Federal Constitutional Protection Office. The latter eventually may become an ever more important actor located between the two intra-party combatants. Assuming that there is a stalemate between the latter, this coalition of heterogeneous forces can function, even though they do not belong together from the perspective either of ideas, or goals, or mentalities. However, if one side were to demand – and succeed in obtaining – the complete subordination of the other, the game would be over and the AfD would suffer the same fate as all the other right-wing organizations that preceded it.

How long can the cooperation between the pragmatic and the extreme forces in the AfD continue to function before the internal armistice is broken? Up until now the party has overcome this challenge, because its internal structure and external resonance have complemented each other. Its external structure also includes the federal system itself, which encourages different versions of one party to coexist under one roof, thereby opening up spaces of action that do not exist in more highly centralized state systems. Thus, on the level of individual federal states, there is no reason why a more radical variant of the AfD cannot exist in some places and a more moderate variant in others. The cooperation of unequal forces can work either in the case of stalemate or when the faction oriented to parliamentary politics holds the upper hand, for in either case the state and society will not intervene on a massive scale to marginalize the actor in question.

To the extent that the radical forces oppose adaptation to the laws of democratic parliamentarism, the equilibrium of bipolarity between the movement- and the parliament-oriented factions comes out of joint. If the radical forces try to fend off any gradual adaptation to dominant circumstances and if they want to escape being tamed by parliamentarism, they will put an end to the success story of the AfD. We will have to wait and see when the limits have been reached. Is the AfD on the verge of implosion, or is another metamorphosis in the cards for it? There are good reasons to think that the AfD will not pose any further electoral danger at the federal level, at least, although it is also unlikely that the other parties will win back many voters from the AfD. A great deal depends on how relationships within the AfD evolve, especially those between the federal and state levels as well as those between East and West. For now, the AfD appears as a bipolar actor, spanning both movement and parliament. If that balance should tip in favor of the extremist forces, a split along federal-state lines or between East and West might be in store for the party. If the extreme forces were to survive beyond an equilibrium between moder-

ates and provocateurs, it would then be up to not only the established parties and civil society, but also the security forces of the Federal Republic to respond appropriately.

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Frank Decker

Here to Stay

Where is the AfD headed?

In certain respects, it is a mystery why it has taken so long for a right-wing populist party to get established in the party system of the Federal Republic. True, even as early as the 1980s, tendencies toward fragmentation in the rightist camp gave rise to a »third wave« of right-wing extremism that continues to this day. For clarity's sake, the first wave began in the immediate postwar era and lasted until the Socialist Reich Party was banned in 1952. The second wave commenced in the mid-Sixties and swept the National Democratic Party (NPD), founded in 1964, into seven provincial (*Land*) parliaments, but thereafter the rising rightist tide soon ebbed. By contrast, the third wave buoyed other parties as well: The Republikaner (REP), a splinter group of the CSU founded in 1983, won seats in *Land* parliaments three times; the Deutsche Volksunion (German People's Union), established in 1987 by the Munich publisher Gerhard Frey, got into *Land* parliaments eight times; and the NPD managed it four more times during the third wave. However, a breakthrough at the national level remained a distant dream for all of the aforementioned parties.

One reason for this weakness was precisely the parties' extremism, which had a deterrent effect on many voters and thus frustrated the evolution of a populist messaging strategy. Indeed, even some ideologically moderate groups in the Federal Republic that tested that very strategy discovered that it didn't work. Neither did the attempt to lead an existing party onto the populist path, a scheme attributed to the deceased FDP politician Jürgen Möllemann. Finally, none of the newly established local rightist parties, such as the Hamburg Stadt-Party (The Instead Party), the Bund Freier Bürger (The Free Citizens' Party), and the Schill Party (named after an ex-judge) was able to replicate its initial successes and expand beyond the regional level.

We know from comparative research that an ignition spark is usually needed – a definite »populist moment« – to produce parties or movements of this type. In the case of the AfD (Alternative for Germany), this spark was the financial and euro crisis that opened a window of opportunity for a party critical of the EU. The core demands of its program, including controlled dissolution of the monetary union and rejection of any further deepening of the process of European integration, were well designed to allow further right-wing populist platform elements to be tacked on. These combined opposition to the establishment (the essential element of populism) with »anti« positions on the immigration issue and other policy areas.

In this context, several circumstances benefited the AfD. First, it was able to link up with various predecessor organizations, ranging from the defunct Euro-critical party Bund Freier Bürger, to the Social Market Economy Initiative and the conservative campaign network of the Civil Coalition, controlled by the current deputy chair of the party's parliamentary contingent, Beatrix von Storch. The Sarrazin debate of 2010, in which a prominent right-wing figure made outrageous comments about Muslims, also probably helped to pave the way for right-wing populism. Still, it is certainly not the case that the AfD simply appeared out of nowhere.

Second, because of the kinds of programs they adopted and the actions they took while jointly governing the country from 2009-2013, the two »bourgeois« parties, the CDU/CSU and the FDP, have opened up niches in the party system. While the Liberals, as a Euro-skeptical party, failed to support the bailout policy in the wake of a close members-only referendum in 2011, in the CDU under Angela Merkel's leadership tried-and-true family and social policies were jettisoned one by one and then taken up by the AfD. Third, the new kid on the block profited from cultivating a respectable, bourgeois image and from the fact that prominent defectors almost without exception came from the ranks of the Union or the FDP. Even political scientists classified the new party, founded by the Hamburg economics professor Bernd Lucke, a former member of the CDU, as »right-wing liberal« or »right-wing conservative,« but not yet as »right-wing populist.«

Nevertheless, even at that time the AfD bore the seeds of right-wing populism within itself. From the very outset, conflicts over its future orientation raged within its ranks. Whereas the economists' wing around Lucke and the former head of the Industry Association, Hans-Olaf Henkel, emphasized the European question and preferred that the party take an economically liberal position, the national-conservative wing led by Frauke Petry and Alexander Gauland played up issues involving »identity politics« and advocated a populist appeal to the voters. For the national-conservative faction, in addition to immigration, family and gender issues also occupied center stage.

Success in the *Land* elections in East Germany in the late summer of 2014 certainly was not an unimportant factor in aiding and abetting the AfD's rightward lurch. The party associations at the *Land* level were quick to seize upon those results as confirmation that their line was the correct one: moving beyond obsession with the Europe issue in favor of broader right-wing populist platform. Lucke fought

against the radicalization in vain. When Petry replaced him as party chair in July of 2015, the party split. Together with other representatives of the economically liberal faction, Lucke started a new Euro-critical party, the Alliance for Progress and a New Beginning, which, however, turned out to be stillborn. Even though it shared many positions with the original party, it could achieve little against the competition of the larger and by now much shriller rump-AfD, since the refugee issue now overshadowed most other conflicting opinions.

The pull of the refugee issue was destined to intensify the attraction that the AfD now exerted in the right-wing extremist camp. This is the case especially in East Germany, albeit not only there, where some elements of the party advocated openly racist and anti-democratic positions. The party's dealings with Björn Höcke, the *Land* chair of the AfD in Thuringia, shows how difficult it has become to draw clear lines of demarcation against right-wing extremism. Although Lucke and Petry wanted to get rid of him, they proved unable to do so. Höcke, who maintains contacts with the new right's NPD scene, and whose scandal-ridden public image lands him regularly on the front page of newspapers, has even managed to attract support from representatives of the more moderate wing of the party. What united both sides was their common opposition to Petry. After many self-inflicted wounds due to her blatantly imperious leadership style, Petry left the party and its parliamentary delegation after the federal election of 2017, in which the right-wing populists triumphed with an unexpectedly high vote share of 12.6 %.

There are many indications that the AfD is going to find a home – at least over the middle term – in the Federal Republic's party system. Here, »over the middle term« should be taken to mean »over two electoral cycles.« The prognosticating capabilities of political science cannot offer forecasts any farther ahead than that. The AfD's ascendance doubtless marks a deep caesura in the history of the Federal Republic, because now, for the first time since the Fifties, true right-wing extremists are sitting in the Bundestag. Of course, in the broader European context this development looks more like normalization. In other European countries right-wing populist deputies long have been part of the basic configuration of the party system.

In research circles there is much dispute about whether the rise and success of right-wing populism should be attributed more to social and/or economic factors or to cultural conflicts. While some scholars portray right-wing voters as typical losers from globalization or modernization, others stress that the party's main base of support does not come from the economically disadvantaged at all. In fact, studies show, to cite one example, that neither a high unemployment rate nor a high proportion of foreigners in and of themselves will make people more inclined to vote for right-wing populists. In the western part of Germany, the AfD seems to thrive mainly where voters have below-average household incomes and/or hold jobs in industry. In the eastern states right-wing extremism is strong in rural areas that suffer from out-migration and are on the verge of being left behind economically. Among AfD voters, the unemployed and blue-collar workers generally are over-

represented, but they constitute only a quarter of the total AfD electorate. The other three-quarters consist of white-collar employees, civil servants, and independents. Also, when it comes to educational attainments, the middle ranks predominate among AfD voters.

If one considers the attitudinal profiles of the party's electoral base, a clearer picture emerges. As compared to other voters, those who choose the AfD display a considerably higher level of discontent as well as a greater attraction to far-right beliefs. Thus, voting for the AfD as a protest and as a reflection of attitudes go hand in hand and match up well the party's self-image as »anti-establishment.« The differences between the AfD and its political competitors show up most clearly when one evaluates their respective migration and refugee policies. The AfD's position of uncompromising rejection is shared almost unanimously by its voters. As evidenced by the increased voter turnout of 2016, the AfD has been able to mobilize previous non-voters by harping on those very themes.

By this time, even bold optimists no longer assume that an effort to drive the AfD out of parliament might succeed anytime soon. The combination of demand- and supply-related factors assures the party of a favorable outlook. As far as the demand side is concerned, decisions made in 2015 and 2016 on migration policy, the perpetual debates about repatriating refugees who lack a right to remain, and the »burdening« of the social welfare system by refugees still living in Germany will provide the AfD with enough political ammunition for many campaigns. And, at the European level, the problem is not even close to being solved. In addition, the Fridays-for-Future protests of 2019, which powerfully moved climate protection issues to the top of the political agenda, also allowed the AfD to capture the right pole of the party system. When the party makes common cause with climate change deniers, its radical policies may seem to voters to be on the wrong track. By contrast, its more moderate demands, such as that for prolonged use of nuclear energy as a transitional technology are based on quite well-considered arguments that may meet with acceptance in the bourgeois camp itself.

If one looks at the supply side, a more mixed picture emerges. On one hand, the party can avail itself of the immense resources that will come its way from every level of the party-state system in the wake of its move into parliament. At the same time, it should be able to profit from its highly professional use of social networks, a field in which it is far superior to all the other parties. The right-wing populists owe much of their organizational and campaign strength to the option of sidestepping traditional media and appealing to voters directly via social networks. To draw attention there, they count on conscious political provocations. Simultaneously, the very fact that they don't depend on traditional media enables them to pillory the latter as part of the political establishment, colluding with the country's rulers. This generalization holds true especially concerning their statements about public broadcast networks.

On the other hand, internal developments within the AfD pose considerable risks to the party. The danger that the AfD will collapse under the weight of its own organizational blundering is a constant problem for any young party, but it is

the least of the AfD's worries. The far-right currents in the party are much more troubling. These have gradually grown stronger since the party's founding, to the point where observers are already classifying the AfD as right-wing extremist and no longer as right-wing populist. Party officials closely tied to the extremist wing around Höcke and the party chair in Brandenburg, Andreas Kalbitz, still don't constitute a majority; yet their influence on the entire party is so strong, both in its internal effects and on the party's external image, that the numerical superiority of the more moderate forces matters less and less. Because the democratic faction of the AfD no longer can – or wants to – mount any resistance to these extremist tendencies, ultimately it will become complicit in them.

The subversion of right-wing populist parties by right-wing extremist elements is a notorious problem for the Federal Republic. The fact that, since the departure of the Lucke wing, the more moderate faction of the party has not launched any counteroffensive worth mentioning against this takeover and does not seem poised to do so is probably best explained by the favorable electoral outcomes that the party registered in 2016. Nevertheless, the AfD's rather disappointing performance in some of the western states suggests that radicalization is hurting them among the very pool of voters they most desire to attract: the bourgeois-conservative segment. That effect might intensify if some elements of the party come under surveillance by the Constitutional Protection authorities soon, a step that would, as it were, put an official seal on the suspicion that the party has fallen into the hands of extremists. Presumably, such a move would deepen the rift between the more moderate and extreme factions and potentially lead to self-destructive conflicts. Against this backdrop, there is much to be said for the view that, even if the AfD becomes well-established in the German party system over the middle- and long-term, it will not enjoy the same degree of voter support – at least on the national level – that right-wing populists have in France, Austria, and Denmark.

If one looks more specifically at eastern Germany, the situation appears somewhat different. There, in the wake of elections in Brandenburg and Saxony in 2019, the same scenario that had occurred in Saxony-Anhalt in 2016 repeated itself: The Union parties and the SPD were only able to form a coalition against the AfD together with the Greens. In Thuringia even that was no longer possible due to the strong performance of the Left party. Initially, the CDU's *Land* party association considered a cooperation deal with the Left party under Minister-President Ramelow, but the party leadership in Berlin brusquely shot down that idea, pointing to the »equidistance commandment.« The CDU deputies then willingly walked into the trap laid by Höcke's AfD by enabling the election of an FDP politician, Thomas Kemmerich, to the office of minister-president on the strength of their own votes plus those of the AfD. Although the storm that broke shortly thereafter forced Kemmerich to resign a few days later, the fall from grace made it clear how fragile the »firewall« between the bourgeois parties and the right-wing populists and extremists had become. Worried observers such as the former FDP interior minister, Gerhart Baum, thought it meant that a »whiff of Weimar« was wafting across the country. Even though one might not buy into such alarmist analogies,

they do give evidence of the dramatic changes that have come about due to the arrival of the AfD in the party landscape and political culture of the Federal Republic.



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Horst Meier

Safe Spaces and Tender Minds: The contemporary American debate on free speech

»We the people«: These famous words begin the American Constitution of 1789. »We the people,« in order to » ... secure the blessings of liberty for ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish the Constitution of the United States of America.« At the heart of the *American Creed*, which encompasses a commitment to the contents of the Constitution, one finds a proud awareness of popular sovereignty and – of equal significance – consciousness of inalienable rights, above all the right to freedom of speech. The latter is guaranteed by the First Amendment without any ifs ands or buts. Over many decades civil rights organizations fought for and won from the Supreme Court recognition of what today is the most liberal conception of freedom of opinion in the world. Not only does it protect neo-Nazi marchers and hate speech; it also shelters anarchists and even flag burning by those who question the value of patriotism. This is so because civil disturbances and dissent are considered to be the natural environment of democracy.

However, the luster of free speech has been fading, and not just since the Trump era began. For some years now, debates have raged at American universities about whether »controversial« speakers should be allowed on campus. Highly sensitive students demand »safe spaces« and »trigger warnings« to shield them from potentially shocking statements. The old guard suspects that what they call the »snowflakes« (the tender-minded students) are pouting in their safe spaces because they are not up to carrying on a robust debate. The distinctive feature of this new phase in the battle over free speech is that the state is not trying to act as a censor; instead, it is the citizens themselves who are demanding limits on freedom of speech. At US universities, once bastions of free speech, there seems to be little tolerance for provocative ideas today.

First, let's consider the above-mentioned demand for safe spaces. What this means is that there should be secure, sheltered zones that are intended to shield minorities from aggression, discrimination, prejudices, and hurtful speech. In her book *Achtung, Zensur!* (*Watch Out, Censorship!*), which concerns freedom of thought and its limits, the German language and literature scholar Nikola Roß-

bach describes a safe space as a »place free of discrimination and violence (...) where one is not confronted by unpleasant things.« Many of the examples that she cites seem off-putting, even bizarre. For instance, one female law professor in the United States reported that some of her female students refused to take an exam on the issue of »sexual harassment.« The flip side of this sensitivity is the burgeoning worry that one could be branded as a sexist or racist, or as homo- or Islamophobic.

The victim's viewpoint become absolute

Of course, nobody should object to the premise that we should deal with one another respectfully and politely. But entertaining the fantasy that a university should be something like a therapeutic protective space in which everyone will be safe from painful experiences and even dangerous thoughts does sound a little naïve. The world is not a safe space, nor is the university. In its classical form the university was supposed to be an institution of learning that encourages the free exchange of ideas and in which people from different cultures meet who hold conflicting opinions. Such a place can be a forum for critical thinking only if conflicts within it are not preemptively suppressed but instead are brought into the open in a civilized manner. How are people who already have avoided unusual and strange experiences during their university studies supposed to deal with a problem-laden, contradictory reality later on?

Another slogan gives rise to similar misgivings. It goes by the name of trigger warnings and refers to cautions given about contents that might evoke unpleasant feelings. The concept of a »trigger« comes from trauma research and designates stimuli that bring to mind a previously suffered experience of violence. In the American university milieu, the concept was blown out of proportion to include even everyday unpleasanties. Thus, some demanded in all seriousness that course syllabi should be accompanied by trigger warnings merely because they feature lists of works from world literature in which the topics of slavery and violence come up.

Now we might ridicule concerns like these as quixotic and hypersensitive and turn back to our quotidian agendas. Yet these desires for soft censorship do become really dangerous as soon as an institution accommodates them by regulating speech officially. A proclamation by the University of Chicago protests against such restrictions by alluding to its »solemn responsibility« to strengthen a »lively and fearless freedom of debate« and by defending itself against those who attack it.

Recent polls in the US showed that while a large majority of students approve of freedom of speech in principle, approximately half of them also advocate limitations in the name of minorities that might feel offended. So, it's no wonder that, when it comes to discussions and talks, demands have been raised to dis-invite politically controversial speakers. But if they show up anyway, they are sometimes impeded either by being shouted down, stopped by blockades, or even subjected to physical assaults.

The right to inoffensive opinions

What is the true source of this aversion to confronting provocative ideas or »intolerable« arguments? What nourishes the petulance with which those who advance uncomfortable ideas are marginalized? As the American psychologist Jonathan Haidt explained in an interview, most members of the »snowflake« generation are overprotected children of the middle class. Haidt suggests that their parents are concerned about shielding them from the hardships of reality so that, as far as practically possible, they will be exempted from frustrations. But then their experience with conflict will be correspondingly meager.

Jeffrey Herbst, director of the *Newseum*, an educational institution in Washington, D.C. that is devoted to freedom of speech and the press, offers an instructive account of the present situation. Analyzing the »true crisis of free speech on campus,« he argues that the headline-grabbing, high-profile clashes over unwelcome speakers are just the tip of the iceberg. But, he continues, »we should not confuse the symptoms with the disease.« The real problem is the profound transformation that has taken place in the consciousness of the younger generation. Jeffrey Herbst describes the new attitude toward freedom of speech as the »right to inoffensive opinions.« And in fact this reversal of perspective, the switch from freedom to restrictions, does seem to be characteristic of this generation. So it happens that a generation increasingly censors itself and others, although it usually does so tacitly, as informal norms exert pressures to conform.

Relying on more recent studies, Herbst points out that prospective students already bring with them problematic experiences from their schools. They are the first generation to have grown up with social media. Digital platforms make it easy for them to block out anything disturbing while algorithms envelop them in a cocoon of relatively friendly news and welcome content. Thus, it seems like an obvious step to transfer these virtual filters to the real, physical world.

The blessings of liberty

Jeffrey Herbst, after diagnosing the crisis now affecting freedom of speech, proposes that we promote a robust understanding of free speech at every level of education. We should especially get one crucial point across to young people: Open exchange of opinions offers the best protection even for those minorities in whose behalf they are demanding safe spaces. Ultimately, diversity flourishes only where everyone can speak freely. If this campaign should fail, Herbst fears, a restrictive understanding of freedom of speech soon could come to dominate American society.

One is tempted to add: and with disastrous consequences, too. In a democracy, people must learn to endure it when they are goaded into outrage. This is the case because the individual freedom to speak out forces society to grapple with a reality that is both crude and unpleasant. We need free men and women who can calmly accept the inevitability that other people will avail themselves of this freedom as well, and that they may do so in irritating ways. In other words, the alternative to safe spaces is »brave« spaces.

Barack Obama, no less, in a 2016 speech at *Howard University* encouraged listeners to be prepared for conflict: »Don't try to shout people down (...) no matter whether you find what they say to be ridiculous or offensive! Obama advised his student public to »let them speak« and reassured them that »this doesn't mean you can't challenge them. But listen to them, get involved, refute their arguments or even learn something from them.« »Defeat them on the battlefield of ideas« insisted Obama.

The United States Supreme Court coined a classic expression of this outlook. Debate on public issues, the Court declared, should be »uninhibited, robust, and wide open« (*New York Times Co. v. Sullivan*, 1964). Those words were written more than 50 years ago, and it looks as though every generation will have to rediscover for itself the blessings of free speech: the blessing of a society that does not timidly shy away from the other, but offers him or her a heartfelt welcome – as a dissenting partner in a conversation, the avoidance of which would constitute a grievous loss. After all, having an opinion is not a solitary pastime.



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Delara Burkhardt

A European Green Deal

The way toward a social and ecological turning point

At long last, European climate and environmental policy has gotten moving again. Barely eleven days in office, the Dutch Social Democrat and Vice-President of the European Commission, Frans Timmermans, delivered a memorandum on the European Green Deal. The fact that the scheme was presented in such a short time shows how seriously he takes the issue. The European Green Deal is supposed to be the European response to the climate and environmental emergency proclaimed by the European Parliament in November.

»Memoranda« are papers prepared by the European Commission that inform the public about the fundamental thinking behind parliamentary bills and the timeline for their consideration. Later, they will become more detailed and concrete as they pass through the legislative process. But a great deal can already be gleaned from the European Green Deal memorandum. Although it does not represent the kind of radical political paradigm shift that would cast doubt upon the principle of growth, it should nonetheless lead us to expect a more ambitious European climate and environmental policy, one that is headed in the right direction. This is also what the Social Democratic S&D delegation in the European Parliament has

been demanding. But in the case of some of the legislative projects being considered, there is room for improvement and/or a need for more detailed information.

A climate protection law at the European level is to be the foundation stone of the Green Deal. In this manner the goal of making the EU carbon neutral by 2050 is supposed to be inscribed in EU law. Furthermore, the Union's medium-term climate target is supposed to be raised. The EU currently had planned to cut 40 % of its climate-altering greenhouse gases by 2030, as compared to a 1990 baseline. Now the Commission is proposing to raise the target to 50 % and possibly even to 55 %. We Social Democrats in the European Parliament demand that the target should be set at 55 % without further ado. That, plus the demand for carbon neutrality by 2050, is also the position of the European Parliament. Although it is only the second-largest bloc in the Parliament, the S&D contingent has managed to cobble together a progressive majority in favor of more climate protection consisting of Social Democrats, Greens, Leftists, Liberals (yes, there really are Liberals in Europe with whom it is possible to devise ambitious climate policies), and a few Conservatives who have deviated from their delegation's party line.

However, the European Parliament cannot pass EU laws all by itself. To do that it must secure the agreement of the governments of the EU member-states. Unfortunately, this is where the real difficulties begin. Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary, all of which depend heavily on fossil fuels, particularly coal, have long opposed the 2050 carbon neutrality goal. It now looks as though they are going to abandon their resistance. One reason for their change of heart is the fact that the Green Deal envisions the creation of a »just transition fund« to ease the move to climate-friendly energy sources. It is intended to support regions on the way toward carbon neutrality but especially hard-hit by structural shifts to carry out the requisite transformation. The assistance may be given for the promotion of trade and industry or invested in continuing education and/or retraining measures for employees who will be hired in new or green sectors of the economy. This, too, is an idea advanced by European Social Democracy that finally will be incorporated into European law. Still, it is not yet clear how generously endowed the fund will be and exactly which regions will be able to tap into it. Early in 2020 the Commission will issue more specific proposals on those points. We Social Democrats would like to see new money put into the funds rather than having existing regional subsidy budgets simply relabeled.

This just transition fund is an important building block; it is a symbol of the guiding principle of the new, Social-Democratic tinged climate policy in the EU. Ambitious climate policy must be combined with social and structural policy since Social Democratic climate policy doesn't serve only those worried about the end of the world; it also serves those who are worried about the end of the month. In addition, Commission VP Timmermans has announced an energetic campaign of house and apartment remodeling, designed especially to favor low-income households. Of course, that is an important step, given that housing constitutes 40 % of Europe's energy consumption, but also because Europe has an enormous problem with »energy poverty.« Some 50 million people on this continent – i.e., around a

tenth of all Europeans – cannot afford to keep their dwellings warm enough in winter, which leads not only to health problems but carries a stigma that can result in social exclusion. The renovation of older buildings could contribute a great deal to the reduction of energy costs.

But especially when it comes to combating energy poverty, I wish more initiatives had been announced, for example ones designed to strengthen the rights of energy consumers. The S&D contingent will put some further measures on the table in this area.

The topic of a recycling economy also occupies a prominent place in the Commission's memorandum again: i.e., transforming the economy's mode of production such that raw materials will be reprocessed and recovered constantly, while as little trash as possible is generated. In this field consumers' rights will play a greater role. Among other things the Commission wants to investigate whether there should be a »right of repair.« Not only would that be good for the environment; it would also save cash for consumers.

Actually, the memorandum addresses more than just climate issues; it also takes on protection of species diversity, forest conservation in Europe and all across the world, ecological financing, agriculture, trade and environment, and much more. The topic of species conservation, in particular, has moved far up the new Commission's list of priorities. I welcome that very much, since worldwide one million of the eight million known species are threatened with extinction. Nevertheless, the proclamations concerning species preservation are still rather vague. Here, I am waiting for more details and proposals for compulsory goals and independent financing for the year 2020. I also wish there had been a clearer change of course in European agricultural policy. After all, it constitutes the largest item in the EU budget and currently provides subsidies solely on the basis of farm size. I want an EU agricultural policy in which there is public funding only for public services such as climate and species protection.

In short, the European Commission is now moving forward toward a social and ecological pivot. Yet we should not overestimate what the EU can accomplish. The EU does indeed have broad authority, particularly in the areas of environment and climate, where it can set goals and minimum standards. But especially in matters concerning financing and the social-policy issues that accompany environmental and climate policy, both national and regional governments have to contribute as well. The EU's annual budget is far too small (about twice as much as that of North-Rhine Westphalia, but for a half billion people rather than around 18 million) for it to finance the transformation on its own. But it can create incentives. National budgets, too, must do their part. Unfortunately, on account of European rules on debt this is not always so easy. That is the reason I am asking for a reform of the European Stability and Growth Pact to turn it into an accord on sustainability, so that investments in the social-ecological transformation would not be counted as debts. Where social policy is concerned, the EU has virtually no authority. Here, each individual country bears the responsibility for creating equal opportunities, access to labor markets, fair working conditions, social security, and inclusion in

times of rapid transformation in the world (of work). Such shifts are occasioned not just by the need to adapt to climate change, but by other trends as well, such as digitalization and globalization. At its last national party congress, the SPD introduced a white paper outlining a new kind of social welfare state – one that would give people a helping hand throughout these changing times.

It has taken half a year for the new Commission finally to begin its work. I will remain committed to establishing an ambitious framework for European climate policy and the social, structural, and financial-policy goals that will buttress it as the EU approaches a social and ecological turning-point. I expect that the German government ministries currently run by the CDU and CSU, those for the economy, agriculture, and transportation, will contribute constructively so that German Federal Government policy finally can catch up on these issues.



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Holger Rogall

For a Sustainable Economy – but a Socially Responsible one

The kind of economy we have today has exceeded the earth's natural carrying capacity in many respects. Future generations will not accept the excuses offered by today's politicians for their prevarication. The disastrous consequences of a warming climate are well-known from reports issued by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, IPCC, and expert opinions submitted by the German Federal Government's Scientific Advisory Council on Global Environmental Change. Thus, we will rest content with an interim conclusion: A warming climate will eventuate in dramatic macroeconomic costs (according to Niclas Stern they will amount to 5-20 % of global GDP) that will trigger a permanent depression and mass impoverishment. Consequently, the anthropogenic hot period now underway will render economic activity as we currently understand it impossible in the future. Hence the process of transformation leading to a sustainable economy has to begin today. The desire to slow down this process due to alleged social problems is a cynical ploy, since people whose villages and cities are flooded will not worry about rising energy prices.

A sustainable economy aims to set and meet lofty ecological, economic, and social-cultural standards for every person, but within the constraints imposed by the earth's natural carrying capacity. Yet since the latter already has been exceeded, sustainable economic activity implies that we must constantly reduce the global and national consumption of resources (including use of the atmosphere as a sink

for greenhouse gases). For our purposes, that goal may be called the sustainability paradigm. Furthermore, we can designate the strategy for ecologically sustainable economic activity as one of »selective growth« (Erhard Eppler). This transformative process further implies the development of sustainable products as well as processes of growth and shrinkage (for example, the replacement of fossil energy sources by renewable ones and reductions in the use of non-renewable resources). Here, we are not talking about increasing resource efficiency by a few percentage points, but about the sustainable reconstruction (transformation) of global economies, in which sustainable products, processes and patterns of consumption will replace those of today that are ill-suited for the future.

To stay within the boundaries of the earth's natural carrying capacity amid all these developments, we must stick to the formula for ecologically sustainable economic activity: resource productivity must consistently grow at a faster clip than gross domestic product (GDP). Those tasks must be accomplished in the context of selective growth and by staying within the ecological guardrails (political and legal instruments). Furthermore, we must stay on the strategic paths of a sustainable economy (designing and building products in resource-efficient ways), maintain consistency (develop and employ products and services that accord with the goals of sustainable economic activity) as well as sufficiency (effecting changes in our styles of life and consumption).

Existing empirical data show that, up to this point, only countries that have adopted consistent ecological guideposts and maintained moderate growth rates (less than 2 %) have satisfied the criteria set forth in the formula for sustainable economic activity. According to most indicators in ecological resource accounting as well as the environmentally relevant indicators of the Federal Government's 2016 sustainability program, Germany has been able to meet the criteria of the 1990 sustainability formula.

To meet the standards of the sustainability paradigm (constant reduction in resource consumption) transformations must take place in all essential strategic areas. The use of fossil fuels in major sectors, including the energy economy, industry, transportation, and construction, is responsible for the lion's share (in 2018 about 91 %) of Germany's greenhouse gas emissions (GHGE). The efficiency strategy aims to boost energy productivity. In Germany, primary energy productivity, i.e., the ratio of primary energy consumption to GDP or PEC/GDP, rose by 73 % between 1990 and 2018. Yet that increase was not enough to achieve the desired goals of sustainable energy supplies, since the value added (GDP) in that time period also grew by 49 %, so the PEC only fell by 13 %.

In 2018, the *energy economy* (which includes the generation of electric power and distance heating) was responsible for about 36 % of Germany's GHGE. The consistency strategy implies that, by 2050, the energy economy will be so transformed that renewable energy (RE) sources will provide 100 % of the country's energy. To be sure, considerable investments will have to be made to create the needed infrastructure for such a transition. They will include funding for an energy supply transition to electricity with new demand sectors in the areas of transporta-

tion and heating, the construction of flexible natural gas power plants that feature cogeneration of heat and power, including heat storage, the creation of energy management systems, and the construction of electricity storage facilities. By 2019 the share of RE will have exceeded 40 %.

In 2018, the industrial sector was responsible for around 23 % of GHGE. By engineering CO₂-free raw materials processing (keyword: producing steel with hydrogen) and using secondary materials (recycling economy), this sector can be decarbonized.

The building sector was responsible for roughly 14 % of GHG emissions in 2018. In that same year, the share of renewable energy in buildings amounted to a mere 14 %; consequently, it now appears as though the Federal Government's targets (a stock of climate-neutral buildings) will not be met. Hence, in this case as well the three strategic paths will have to be implemented by resorting to some new political-legal tools. To carry out the efficiency strategy, the need for heat energy will have to be reduced (e.g., by insulating buildings). In accord with the consistency strategy (e.g., heat generation by renewables, exploiting the potential of industrial waste heat) the GHGE of remaining consumption also will have to be reduced drastically.

The transportation sector was responsible for around 19 % of GHGE in 2018. Since 1990 this sector has not achieved any reductions at all. In fact, the share of renewables here is barely 6 %. As if that were not enough, we must also take into account noise pollution and emission of noxious substances (transport is the biggest emitter in cities), accidents, and the encroachment of vehicles and parking lots on urban spaces. For all those reasons, the transportation sector has by far the worst environmental record and thus needs the strongest ecological guardrails. Following the consistency strategy, motorized transport should rely on electricity, and a shift towards »ecomobility« (local public transport, bicycles, walking) must take place.

Where the transition to sustainable economic activity is concerned, a complete rebuilding of the economy is on the agenda. Not only do we need to reduce emissions of pollutants; we also have to scale back resource use by enhancing efficiency and aiming for sufficiency as we develop new, more consistent technologies. If you take the products of industrial society one by one, they are more or less innocuous. But taken as a whole they are the source of almost all environmental problems. In the next 30 years, the use of natural resources should be scaled back annually across the globe. The following approaches seem well suited to the range of products in industrial societies.

First: Avoidance of wasteful production by using highly durable, repair-friendly, and retrofittable assembly techniques, efficient deployment of resources in production, e.g., through miniaturization and lightweight construction techniques, and a strategy of sufficiency. In the industrialized countries people might ask themselves whether they could say »no« to a new product without suffering a reduction in their quality of life and instead just use the older one for a longer period of time.

Second: recovery of raw materials (recycling economy). Today, a lot of complex mass-produced items are not recovered and recycled but instead sent to develop-

ing or middle-income countries. The lagging rate of recycling could be increased by instituting deposit systems. Another approach is »urban mining,« in which buildings and waste disposal sites serve as raw materials repositories. The goal is eventually to recover such materials completely.

Third: alternative materials. This strategic path attempts to replace inorganic raw materials by resources capable of regrowth, which of course must be generated in sustainable ways.

Ecological guardrails

Unguided market processes cannot bring about the envisioned process of transformation toward sustainable economic activity either nationally or globally during the limited time interval we have left (30 years). Today it has been proven – unfortunately – that consumers make at best modest contributions to sustainability, since one's personal ecological balance sheet is determined more by income than by eco-consciousness. On average, a higher income results in bigger houses and cars and longer airplane trips. However, when we consider people of equal incomes, the ecological balance sheets of eco-conscious people turn out to be superior. Socio-economic factors send false price signals (electricity generated from coal can be cheaper than solar power only if environmental costs are externalized onto future generations). The dominant path dependencies, e.g., on fossil energy sources, together with the structures of economic power, as in energy markets and well-organized interest groups, wield a more powerful influence on behavior than human consciousness does. Consequently, the processes of transformation will require a new general framework of ecological guardrails, both political and legal. Civil society, too, needs to exert pressure to achieve those goals. In addition, civil society should seek an alliance with policymakers and companies that do business in socially responsible ways. In this context it is crucial to emphasize that setting up ecological guardrails is not something intended to limit the freedom of present and future generations but rather to safeguard that freedom. The necessary political and legal instruments are available; they just have to be brought to bear in a consistent way. First, administrative law includes instruments with direct application to these circumstances such as threshold values, life cycle limits, outright prohibitions on certain products, and use requirements such as the obligation to connect to distance heating systems running on renewable energy and mandatory installation of RE systems on buildings. Second, there are legal tools with indirect effects such as environmental education and subsidy programs. Third, we have economic instruments such as the greening of the financial system, e.g., by taxing CO₂, introducing a so-called bonus malus system such as the one used in Germany's Renewable Energy Law, and enacting tradeable rights to use nature such as are found in emissions trading systems.

Unfortunately, climate change goals (limiting greenhouse gas emissions to one ton per capita and per annum) cannot be reached by 2050 by relying on the instruments already in effect. The climate package introduced by the German Federal Government won't even attain the climate protection goals scheduled for 2030. In

particular, CO₂ taxes were set much too low, which sparked a great deal of criticism. Later, a conciliation committee in parliament finally raised them to 25 euros a ton, slated to rise to 55 euros by 2025.

Social impacts of the process of transformation

Ever since the industrial revolution, all economies regularly have needed to make structural changes. Usually, those changes led to painful adjustments such as job losses, changing one's residence, or cost increases. Politics, even in a social democracy, cannot prevent these structural shifts, but must cushion their impact through industrial policy and continuing education.

The process of transformation to sustainable economic activity can be understood as one that calls for innovation and investment and, in this sense, it can increase employment and income for a long time to come (who could claim to foresee what will exist in 50 years?). The global market volume for »green« technologies had already reached 3.2 trillion euros by 2016. Around the same time some 1.5 million people in Germany were employed in the environmental sector. In 2017, 317,000 people were employed in the renewable energy sector alone. In addition, by using renewable energy sources, Germany annually saves two billion kilowatt hours of fossil fuels that would mostly have to be imported otherwise. Thus, up to this point we would have to consider the employment effects of the energy pivot to have been positive. In the future, further employment spikes may be expected in the educational and health sectors.

Nevertheless, in view of the turning point we have reached in transportation, major employment crashes remain a real worry. Over the last ten years that prospect has induced segments of the automobile industry and the political class to slow down the transformation process as much as they could. Keeping yesterday's technologies on life support with state-provided financing has never worked. Instead, those funds must be used to energize the innovations and investments associated with the process of transformation.

Germany has 42.2 million dwellings. In many of its major cities, rents have risen so much over the past ten or twenty years that an ever-increasing number of tenants no longer can afford to pay the rent for their apartments. Yet this trend has nothing to do with the turning points reached in energy, transportation, or resources; rather, it is linked to various socio-economic developments in Germany and other major countries or regions. Population increases are especially marked in metropolitan areas experiencing strong economic growth. There, new construction simply can't keep pace. Furthermore, privatization waves in the Nineties were an even more important factor. In such cases stocks of municipally owned housing were sold off to international real estate companies. The housing market should have been treated as an essential public service, as was the case in Vienna where public utility housing enterprises and non-profit residential building cooperatives were given massive subsidies, e.g., buildable land at favorable prices or low-interest loans. But instead, housing stocks were turned over to markets interested only in their return on investment.

It is well-known that wealth and income disparities are on the rise globally, including in Germany. Today, that trend has led some people to demand that environmental protection should proceed only if it is compatible with social responsibility. But there are at least three responses to such arguments.

First, environmental protection – of all policies – is supposed to accomplish the distributive justice goals that have eluded the efforts of labor unions and Social Democrats. Thus, for example, anyone who cares about justice is supposed to make sure that foreign IT companies finally contribute their fair share to the public sector, a tax on wealth is enacted, inheritance taxes and the top brackets of income taxes increased along with minimum wage levels and transfer payments.

Second, whoever enacts economic incentive (Pigou) taxes should legislate some form of compensation at the same level. Some countries that have introduced such a levy return surplus revenue to the citizens. Switzerland does so by reducing contributions to its health care funds, while Italy accomplishes the same thing by paying out eco-bonuses. Unfortunately, the climate package approved by the Federal Government does not measure up to those models. Low-income households, in particular, are made to bear a disproportionate burden. A reduction in the Renewable Energy Law tax or a per capita climate premium would have been more constructive in this case.

Third, environmental policy should abandon economic instruments and rely more on a regulatory approach to policymaking, which would treat everyone alike and not grant exemptions to the well-off when it comes to the pivot we are making in energy and mobility (e.g., by life-cycle limits and limitations on operating permits for oil and eventually gas heating, coal-fired power plants, and cars that use fossil fuels).

Conclusion: The current mode of economic activity has no future. Once that is understood, then a turning-point in energy, transportation, and resources is called for that will allow us to supply 100 % of our energy from renewables by 2050. The techniques, strategies, and instruments that will enable us to achieve that goal are available, but they must be introduced consistently, and misconduct must be sanctioned. Yet in a sustainable (social-ecological) democracy, this process of transformation needs to be compatible with social justice. That can be accomplished with the assistance of regulatory law and compensatory payments. Of course, for all this to happen politicians will have to show greater zeal for innovation.



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Faith, Knowledge, and the Prospects for Global Understanding

Jürgen Habermas's Genealogy of Post-metaphysical Thought

Karl Jaspers famously referred to the period from about 800-200 BCE as the »axial age,« since religious and metaphysical systems of world interpretation that emerged during that period almost simultaneously in Greece, the Middle East, India, and China have continued to resonate down to the present day. In its wake, Europe especially – although not exclusively – has been the scene of a process of contestation, often highly conflictual, about the relationship between faith and knowledge. At least since the early Enlightenment, that process has assumed the guise of a gradual secularization of thought and action. It is certainly true that this process did not, as many expected in the 19th and the first half of the 20th century, lead to the disappearance of religion. Instead, in most countries forms of coexistence developed between everyday practice and secular ways of seeing the world, on the one hand, and an assortment of options offering religious meaning and the ritualization of life, on the other.

Where the Western way of life took hold, the state and law eventually extricated themselves from the sway of religious authorities. Politics and administration, too, emancipated themselves from the claims of religion for another reason: It often stood in the way of the technological and economic appropriation of a growing body of knowledge about the world. At the same time, economic globalization and the recent migratory movements triggered or encouraged by it have increased the degree of cultural and religious pluralism in most societies, thereby generating ever more conflicts among various groups of believers and between them and those who are resolutely secular. Of course, the American political scientist Samuel Huntington predicted back in the Nineties that these conflicts would lead to a »clash of civilizations,« which might end in warfare. To avoid that outcome, we must ask ourselves under what circumstances a binding global legal order could be created that would be compatible with a variety of cultural and religious traditions and does not one-sidedly endorse the specifically European road to secularization.

In two volumes containing over 1,700 pages, Jürgen Habermas has painstakingly retraced a genealogy (one, incidentally, that he admits is »limited« to the European path) of post-metaphysical thought, albeit from the philosopher's point of view. In the course of that inquiry, he also reflects on the conditions under which a globalization of this process might lay the foundations for a just and universally-accepted world order. Habermas takes up and synthesizes themes from his Peace Prize speech of 2001, which he has discussed in several publications under the heading of *Faith and Knowledge*. In contrast to Samuel Huntington, he takes it for granted that a viable global legal order will remain out of reach as long as Western culture, shaped by Greek, Jewish, and Christian traditions, advances »the claim to universal validity, as it has in the past.« This is of course what it did during the European colonializing past and then after World War II, when the United States put itself forward as the global policeman.

According to Habermas, if the project of a just, universal order is to succeed at all, it must emerge as the result of an open, worldwide discourse in which representatives of all religious groups and of the secular-minded have an equal right to take part.

As one would expect from the author, the conditions that will determine the success or failure of this endeavor are primarily those involving discursive ethics and pragmatics. He argues: »The participants in a discourse to be taken seriously must recognize each other mutually as reasonable subjects, who can learn from one another. This prerequisite, rooted in discursive pragmatics, would be violated as soon as the secular side allowed itself to be guided by an exclusionary understanding of reason and refused to grant any respect to the context of religious embedding, which has not only a motivational, but also a cognitive significance for the other side.« The notion of reason that Habermas adopts here – and it shows up at many other points besides this one – is neither pugnaciously secular, nor is it technocratic and trivialized. Instead, it is a notion that remains aware of the religious and metaphysical impulses that have been active in the world ever since the axial age. That is how the author's words should be taken when, at the end of the first chapter, he writes: »My attempt at a genealogy of post-metaphysical thought should encourage others once again to conceive of human beings as ›rational animals‹ and in this way to embrace a comprehensive concept of reason.«

Habermas does not concern himself with demystifying or even refuting faith. He is interested in what he calls the »disconnection« of faith from knowledge, especially since that phenomenon has been complemented by philosophy, which for its part has severed its ties to faith and now approaches its problems – regardless of any personal religious commitment – in a scientific spirit, i.e. with a methodical attitude of »etsi deus non daretur« (»As if God did not exist«: Hugo Grotius). As philosophy draws away from faith, three consequences follow, pertaining to its relationship to the religious tradition; to law, politics, and society; and to modern natural science. For Habermas this development as a whole obeys an immanent logic, is irreversible, and ultimately is not even exclusively European. Rather, it is a global event that plays out in different forms and with different inflections.

And that is exactly the argument that some reviewers have criticized as one-sided. Thus, for example, Hans Joas took Habermas to task in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (November 14, 2019) for asking the wrong question. Instead of inquiring what philosophy had learned from the discourse on faith and knowledge, he should have asked »how philosophy in the course of its history reached an adequate understanding of faith or might still achieve it.« However, Joas does not clarify how philosophy might come by such an »adequate understanding of faith« unless philosophy, in speaking about religious matters, abandoned its own scientific standpoint. What he really has in mind becomes clear a few lines later when he writes: »Basically, Habermas is saying that, while religion may ›still‹ exist today, it is nevertheless a relic of the past when judged by the tribunal of ›reason.‹« If Joas had written »theology« instead of religion in this sentence, his statement would have been almost unobjectionable. That would have been the case, at any rate, if he meant the theology of the late middle ages and early modern era that long claimed first place

in the curricula of that era's universities. But if religion in this context is taken to mean a disposition, an attitude toward life that features well-documented rituals, we should realize that religion thus understood really isn't the focus of the kind of post-metaphysical thought that interests Habermas.

Things get downright absurd when Joas, in his review, thinks he has to warn the author of the following danger: »But it is not only religious institutions that pose a potential threat. Control by ›secular‹ institutions, for example by a Communist party and its state-apparatus, should be rejected just as strongly as religious tutelage.« It is amazing that Joas believes he must instruct Habermas, of all people, on this point, given that the latter has spent decades defending the foundations of freedom and liberal democracy against *every* version of authoritarianism and despotism. His critique can be explained only on the supposition that he misunderstands Habermas's history of post-metaphysical thought as nothing more than an attack on his own religion and religiosity.

What seems to me to be more thought-provoking is Joas' suggestion that it is not (or, better, not only) a metaphysical world view and socially integrative rituals that bring people under religion's spell, but also, and perhaps primarily, »experiences beyond the pale of everyday life, alone or in the company of others, that need to be articulated.« The concept of experience used by Joas here is not the same as the one employed by David Hume when, in his *Dialogues on Natural Religion*, he categorically denies that we have any experiences of divine qualities or actions. And indeed, it is still an unresolved question whether and to what extent such »extraordinary« religious experiences, however they are communicated, can survive in the face of what Habermas portrays as the evolution of post-metaphysical thought and in a society saturated with that very mentality. But then Habermas would not deny any of this.

Habermas traces the thread of a post-metaphysical understanding of the world back to the beginning of the axial age, and from thence forward, via the Platonic-Plotinian institutionalization of Christianity in the late Roman era and further via Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, John Duns Scotus, William of Ockham, and Martin Luther. The development continues with Baruch Spinoza, Immanuel Kant, and David Hume; Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, the Young Hegelians, Karl Marx and Ludwig Feuerbach; Friedrich Schleiermacher, Søren Kierkegaard, Karl Jaspers, and Charles Sanders Pierce, and continues on into the present day. This reconstruction loses none of its persuasiveness if a lived religiosity, which *bears witness* but according to Schleiermacher needs no confirmation or official enforcement through public »rational« discussion, persists or might even become more meaningful. Habermas implicitly acknowledges that point when he writes: »Schleiermacher's historic achievement is an interpretation of religion intended to confirm that the pious obstinacy of an authentic faith has rights of its own that deserve to be protected.«

In this context Habermas himself, in a postscript to his book, recalls a crucial stimulus to his thinking, that informs his approach in this monumental work, regarded by many reviewers as his »legacy«: »There is an enigmatic sentence by Adorno that has long fascinated me: ›Nothing of theology's content will survive unchanged; everything will have to be put to the test of immigrating into the world

of the secular, the profane.« Taking this sentence as my red thread, I have attempted to present this process of the ›immigration‹ of theological contents into profane thought as a *learning process that can be reconstructed philosophically*.« In this sense it is not entirely wrong for Arno Widman, in his review (*Frankfurter Rundschau*, November 12, 2019), to have recognized Habermas's book principally as an attempt to reconcile faith and knowledge, reason and religion.

In a few sentences at the end of the book Habermas elucidates his own personal position on the question of faith and knowledge: »The secular modern age has turned its back on the transcendent for good reason. But reason itself would wither on the vine if it were to lose touch with the kind of thinking that transcends everything in the world.« The effort to ward off such entropy is a point of contact between post-metaphysical thought and religious consciousness, as long as the latter is embodied in the liturgical practice of a congregation of the faithful, thus preserving itself as a present form of spirit. Ritual aspires to forge ties to a power that flows into the world from transcendence. As long as religious experience can be sustained by a practice in which strong transcendence is made present, it remains a thorn in the side of the modern age, which has given in to the pull of existence without transcendence. And as long as religion can do that, it also challenges secular reason with an unanswered question: Are there semantic contents that have been missed and that still »await« translation »into the profane?«

There is no doubt that, to read this magnum opus properly, the reader must summon up sustained concentration and possess at least superficial familiarity with Europe's philosophical discourses and the development of its intellectual history from its origins in the ancient world onward. And today surely only a small proportion of the reading public would meet those criteria. The author makes it a bit easier for the reader to follow along because, despite the enormous wealth of material that he offers, he understands perfectly how to keep visible the red thread that runs through the entire length and breadth of the book. Moreover, he provides numerous interim summaries and illuminating previews of what remains to be said. In short, he takes readers gently by the hand and leads them through more than two thousand years of intellectual history.

Jürgen Habermas, Auch eine Geschichte der Philosophie, Volume I: Die okzidentale Konstellation von Glauben und Wissen; Volume II: Vernünftige Freiheit: Spuren des Diskurses über Glauben und Wissen. Suhrkamp: Berlin 2019, 1,752 pages, 98 euros

Editor's note: Neither volume has been translated into English yet, but two books by Habermas dealing with many of the same questions are available in English under the titles: *An Awareness of What is Missing: Faith and Reason in a Post-Secular Age* (Polity Press, 2010) and (with Ciaran Cronin) *Postmetaphysical Thinking II* (Polity Press, 2017).



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